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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Malachy Liam Bishop for the Master of Science in Education: Counseling were presented May 22nd, 1995, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Malachy Liam Bishop for the Master of Science in Education: Counseling presented May 22, 1995.

Title: The Predictive Validity of the Admission Criteria for the Counselor Education Program at Portland State University

The Counselor Education Program at Portland State University currently uses five admission criteria to determine the acceptance or rejection of applicants. These criteria include letters of reference, a panel interview, a writing sample, the applicant's undergraduate GPA (UGPA), and the applicant's score on either the MAT or the GRE. Scores on these measures are adjusted and combined to create a single total score upon which admission decisions are based.

The present study attempts to evaluate the validity of these admission criteria in predicting success in the Counselor Education Program at Portland State University. For the purpose of this study, student success was defined in terms of both the GPA upon graduation from the program

and ratings of student clinical counseling skills by program faculty.

The subjects were graduates of the program who had been admitted between the years 1988 and 1991. Information collected for analysis included scores on the admission criteria and GPA upon graduation, age at admission, counseling specialization, and gender. A questionnaire was then developed which asked the program faculty to rate the students' clinical counseling skills.

An analysis of the correlation between scores on the admission criteria and scores on the outcome criteria (graduate GPA and clinical skills score) was performed using the SPSS Statistical Package. Regression analysis showed that among the admission criteria only the MAT score significantly determined success on the outcome criteria. Gender was inversely predictive of graduate GPA (i.e., being female correlated with higher graduate GPA).

Further research, using alternative measures of counseling skill, is indicated. These results suggest the need for such research, and for further evaluation of the current admission criteria.

THE PREDICTIVE VALIDITY OF THE ADMISSION CRITERIA FOR THE COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM AT PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

by

MALACHY LIAM BISHOP

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
EDUCATION:
COUNSELING

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1995

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Introduction

What is the difference between an excellent counselor and a counselor who is merely fair, or even poor? Unfortunately, a counselor is not a quantifiable entity, and so it is difficult to find measures against which to compare counselors. In terms of professional counselors, there are such measures as level of education, licensure, and experience, but these are not necessarily valid measures of effectiveness or skill. There are also less tangible measures. Professional counselors, for example, need clients who think they are competent, helpful, and effective. A regular influx of clients, then, is one professional yardstick. If the counselor is employed, that is another possible measure of ability and competence. One would hope that ineffective counselors would not be employed, or at least, not as counselors.

But in counselor education these measures do not necessarily apply. How then can a graduate program in counseling select students who have the potential to perform at the standard of excellence the program and the profession

would expect? Unfortunately for programs of graduate counselor education, which are charged with the responsibility of selecting or rejecting candidates for admission, there is no scale of measurement that predicts with great certainty which applicants will succeed in the program. Several studies have demonstrated that traditional admission criteria do not predict academic and/or practical counseling success in graduate education.

Some researchers feel that the shortcomings of these traditional admission criteria stem from the fact that the construct they are used to measure is not clearly defined. "The development of a clear, precise, and comprehensive definition of counseling performance is an essential prerequisite to improving measurement capabilities" (Newman & Scott, 1988, p. 75). The same authors proposed the following questions: "What are the essential component dimensions of counselor performance? How do these dimensions relate to one another? What are the dimensions targeted in counselor training? What qualities or competencies distinguish effective and ineffective counselors? What counselor skills, knowledge, and attributes are associated with positive therapeutic outcome?" (p. 75). As the answers to these questions are secured, a clearer and more measurable construct, or constructs, will also emerge. In the meantime, as the profession of counseling works toward such answers,

departments of counselor education try to use the best available means of measuring potential for success.

It is the responsibility of graduate programs to select those applicants who are most likely to do the following things; (not in order of importance) first, to be trainable around requisite counseling skills and processes; second, to complete the graduate program successfully; third, to act thereafter in a manner that reflects positively upon the program and in a way that suggests appreciation for the privilege of having gained acceptance to the program; and fourth, programs must select applicants who will represent the field of counseling with excellence and dedication. Counseling programs therefore carefully screen applicants during the admission process as a means of increasing the likelihood that their graduates will fulfill these expectations.

Counselor education programs use different admission criteria to screen applicants in the attempt to measure those qualities that are most important to the program. While these measures vary between programs, some typical admissions criteria include: (a) a standardized test, such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the Miller's Analogies Test (MAT); (b) the applicant's undergraduate grade point average (UGPA); (c) some form of applicant interview, such as a faculty interview, or group interview; (d) letters of recommendation; (e) a writing sample or essay

on the applicant's goals and reason for applying, and (f) some departments also utilize some form of personality testing (Markert & Monke, 1990).

There is an increasingly large number of studies on the predictive validity of these and other admission criteria. The majority of these studies seem to have concentrated on the predictive validity of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), and used performance in graduate programs in psychology as the dependent variable. Despite the programmatic differences, graduate programs in counseling will find many applicable parallels and pertinent and useful information in these studies. The literature review section of this paper will confirm this statement.

Perhaps the most important point of the existing body of literature is the need for graduate programs and departments not to merely accept, or worse, ignore validity findings obtained from other institutions or in other programs, but to question the validity of their own admission process. As Willingham (1974) stated in his review of 43 studies of graduate prediction, validity studies at different sites give varying results, and while this variability is exacerbated by small sample size, "real variations do occur. It is important to undertake local studies in order to justify selection procedures and utilize available information to maximum benefit" (p. 276).

Results of later studies have led other researchers to the same conclusion.

> A measure shown to have predictive validity in a number of settings is no guarantee of validity in a particular location, consequently obligating local validation of graduate admissions measures. (Bean cited in Patnode, 1992, p. 20)

Statement of Purpose

The Counselor Education Program at Portland State University currently uses five admission criteria. However, whether these criteria allow the department to select the candidates most qualified, or most likely to be successful, has not been empirically tested. The purpose of this thesis is to study the validity of these five criteria in their prediction of student success. For the purpose of this research, there will be two measures of student success. First, grade point average upon graduation from the program, or graduate grade point average (GGPA), and second, faculty-supervisor ratings of the student's clinical counseling skills (SCCS). This paper will examine the correlation between the individual applicant's performance on the five admission requirements and success in the Counselor Education Program, as defined by the two outcome criteria (i.e., GGPA and SCCS).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In his 1974 review of studies of predictive validity of graduate department admission criteria, Willingham stated that while there are a variety of measures that might be used as predictors, and various measures which can be used as criteria, none are entirely satisfactory. This is in part because of the lack of a clearly defined construct which is to be measured.

Willingham (1974) further stated that while there is no obvious way to improve the validity of the present measures, there is little reason to believe that new measures will do a substantially better job of predicting conventional criteria. One main problem, as he saw it, was that the prediction strategy employed is dominated by the notion of scholastic aptitude. There are, however, both training objectives in graduate education that are not explicitly represented in conventional criteria, and student abilities not represented by traditional selection measures. Willingham gave, as an example of the latter, creative potential, but it is easy to think of other examples specifically related to the field of counseling, such as

empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard, to name a few.

In his discussion of specific criteria, Willingham (1974) discussed their strengths and weaknesses: He saw undergraduate GPA as having "obvious relevance as a predictor because it represents the same sort of behavior one is trying to forecast" (p. 274). He pointed out the restricted range and the inconsistent grading standards of various undergraduate schools, however, as possible weaknesses. Letters of recommendation, while often highly relevant and informative, can be unreliable due to the lack of comparability among raters.

Willingham (1974) stated that standardized tests have produced reliable and highly suitable standard measures, and "established relationships between underlying abilities and socially valued, observable behavior" (p. 274). However, they tend to "focus on fairly limited aspects of competency" (p. 274). This is essentially the same problem he sees with comprehensive tests used as criteria for success in graduate schools. Willingham seemed to favor the faculty judgment as a criterion because it measures "important aspects of graduate success other than knowledge of the subject" (p. 277). But even these are faulty, in that the ratings are unreliable and often "not carefully designed to represent observable outcomes of graduate training" (p. 275).

In their discussion of the construct problem in measuring counseling performance, Newman and Scott (1988) pointed out that while general theories of counseling provide the construct for training in schools, the extent that these have been used to measure counseling performance has been limited. The client-centered paradigm, Ivey's (1971) microcounseling skills, and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, among others, have all influenced counselor training programs, but none represent a comprehensive counselor training theory, or a comprehensive measure of counseling skill. This is because of the complex nature of the construct they address.

Froehle (cited in Newman & Scott, 1988, p. 75) defined counseling performance as a multidimensional construct consisting of the following: (a) cognitive criteria, which focus on the demonstration of awareness, knowledge, and understanding; (b) performance criteria, which emphasize the performance of directly observable behaviors; (c) effective criteria, which emphasize the probability that cognitive and performance competencies will be used in particular ways; and (d) consequence criteria, which focus on the expected changes in others a counselor should be able to encourage. This list demonstrates the complexity of the construct, and why it has been so hard to define and measure it.

Markert and Monke (1990) surveyed 61 counselor education programs in the western United States to study the

reliance of these programs on traditional admission criteria, and changes that have been made or are anticipated in these programs. The authors pointed out that a number of studies of traditional measures such as the GRE, undergraduate GPA, and the interview have generally underscored the inadequacies of these measures to predict either academic or counseling success.

The authors sent a questionnaire to counselor education departments regarding current admission practices and changes that had been implemented since the fall of 1985. Of the responding departments, the following list shows the most commonly used criteria: 29 currently required letters of recommendation, 25 a personal statement, 18 prerequisite course work, 16 work experience, 14 an undergraduate GPA of 3.00 or above, 7 an undergraduate GPA of 2.76 or above, 13 an individual interview, 13 the GRE, 8 a group interview, and 5 required the MAT.

According to Markert and Monke (1990), 10 institutions reported recent changes in the undergraduate GPA requirement, most had raised the requirement (i.e., a minimum cut off point), and five had raised it to a minimum of 3.00. Ten schools reported having changed their GRE requirement, either by raising the required score or by developing their own scoring system. While the MAT had not been dropped as a requirement by any department, two departments had added it as an alternative to the GRE.

Three departments reported the development of special rating systems that attempt to quantify admission criteria and render them into a standard score. "Of the programs using formula indices and rating systems, none reported data on prestudies or poststudies to determine the efficacy of such procedures" (p. 53).

Two departments reported adding the use of faculty interview as part of other selection criteria. Three reported the addition of some form of personal and professional goal statements.

Two institutions were conducting experimental projects in the area of department admission. One of these was department-developed competency tests in statistics, counseling theory and techniques, human development, and abnormal psychology, that were expected to be administered on an experimental basis to determine their value as admission criteria. The other developed a 12-unit core of classes that had to be successfully completed prior to admission to the department.

The authors stated that "despite the recognized limitations of traditional criteria, most departments continue to rely heavily on them" (Markert & Monke, 1990, p. 50). Further, the changes that are being made are toward the standardization of scores and the combining of admission criteria scores into a composite score, such as the GRE score with undergraduate GPA, or other combinations, such as

including interview scores and quantified scores from letters of reference. The problem that Markert and Monke (1990) saw with this is that the departments are quantifying criteria that have been shown to have minimal predictive validity. The authors feel that it is important that departments continue to seek admission criteria, processes, and other criteria that accurately predict who will be the best candidates for their departments.

Redfering and Biasco (1976) performed an analysis of 59 counselor education departments in the United States and asked full-time faculty members at these institutions to rank which admissions criteria they feel are the most important. This was an important study because it looked not at the predictive validity of admission criteria, as the present study and many others have, but at the criteria that faculty feel should have priority.

Using a 7-point Likert scale the faculty ranked the criteria from 1 (very important) to 7 (not important). In this way Redfering and Biasco (1976) were able to compare the faculty members' idea of an "ideal" selection process with the reality of the selection criteria most used.

In the ideal selection the rank order of the preferred criteria consisted of: (a) interview, (b) personal knowledge, (c) work experience, (d) undergraduate GPA, (e) letters of reference, (f) test scores, (g) undergraduate majors, and (h) unstructured tasks. The rank order of the

most used criteria in the actual selection criteria was: (a) undergraduate GPA, (b) interview, (c) test scores, (d) letters of reference, (e) personal knowledge, (f) work experience, (g) undergraduate majors, and (h) chairperson's recommendation.

"The findings suggest that there is considerable discrepancy between what we would like to see used as criteria and what we are actually using" (Redfering & Biasco, 1976, p. 303). In fact the correlation between the ideal and the actual criteria was only .66. The authors suggested that it is important to continue to perform local studies of the predictive validity of the most used criteria, because these tests may help point the way to developing more effective selection procedures.

Regarding the predictive ability of the GRE, Goldberg and Alliger (1992) studied whether the GRE predicted grades for graduate students in psychology. In their literature review they report that while a number of studies have shown the GRE to be a good predictor of specific course grades, graduate GPA, and composite judgments of overall performance in graduate school, other studies have reported that use of the GRE for predicting graduate school success is inadequate. This has been particularly true in the case of graduate departments of psychology.

The authors also point out that while the Educational Testing Service recommends against making the GRE the

primary admission criterion, the GRE is one of the most heavily weighted of all university admission variables.

In their study, Goldberg and Alliger (1992) found that the verbal and advanced (psychology) portions of the GRE were not valid predictors of future grades in graduate departments of psychology. The quantitative portion, however, was somewhat predictive of grades in the quantitative courses. On the whole, the authors suggest that the GRE, for psychology and/or counseling students, is not a valid predictor of graduate GPA.

House and Johnson (1993) studied the ability of the GRE and academic background variables (i.e., the undergraduate GPA, undergraduate psychology course grades, and the last 60 credits of undergraduate study) to predict graduate degree completion in psychology. They found that these variables did not predict degree completion similarly across specializations for psychology graduate students. The results suggested that the relationship between predictor variables and degree completion varied by specific area of study. For example, using a multiple regression analysis, GRE verbal scores entered the prediction equation first as the best predictor of degree completion in the professional psychology specialization (as compared with GRE quantitative, UGPA, undergraduate psychology course grades, and last 60 hours of undergraduate study) but were the least successful predictors of the general/experimental psychology

specialization. These results suggested that the GRE and its subsections may be more predictive of degree completion in specific areas of study.

Hosford, Johnson, and Atkinson (1984) performed an evaluation study over a four-year period at the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The authors sought to measure the predictive validity of the Miller's Analogies Test (MAT), the verbal and quantitative portion of the GRE, letters of recommendation, experiential background (documented evidence of life and work experiences as related to counseling), and personal interviews (one with a faculty member, one with two students in the program, and a group interview with several students and several applicants). The outcome measures for this study were academic success and counseling effectiveness (counseling competence as a trainee or anticipated success as a professional), as rated by faculty members in the program.

The results showed the verbal score on the GRE and the MAT to be the only significant predictors of academic success as defined by the faculty ratings. No other predictors significantly predicted either academic success or counseling effectiveness.

Two academic criteria in this study, the GRE quantitative and undergraduate GPA, correlated negatively with overall success in counselor education. The authors

pointed out that past academic performance, in the form of undergraduate GPA, did not predict academic performance in a counselor education program. In fact, undergraduate GPA and the GRE-quantitative score may even relate inversely to counseling competence and expected professional success, though not significantly in this study.

The personal interview and previous experience did not even approach statistical significance when correlated with academic, professional, or trainee success. Hosford, Johnson, and Atkinson (1984) stated in summary:

> If the intent of the selection process is to choose applicants who will be academically successful while in the program, then the results of this study support the continued use of [the verbal score on the GRE or the MAT score]. If, however, the desired goal of the selection process is to choose candidates who will be successful academically and effective as counselors, then the results of this study provide no significant predictor or set of predictors to assist in attaining this goal. (p. 273)

There are several implications of this research literature for the present study. Generally, the predictive validity of traditional admission criteria, such as those discussed in these studies, has been inadequate. This inadequacy is probably due to the characteristics of the criteria being used, and the constructs that they are measuring. If this is true then either one or the other, or both, need to be adjusted.

While many, if not all, of the criteria cited seemed intuitively appropriate, none have proved consistently

valid. If it is the case, as it appears to be with sections of the GRE for example, that criteria predict success only in particular specialties, courses, or skills, then further research is necessary to continue to pinpoint these strengths. In other words, perhaps the constructs are too broad. Continued study at the local level is certainly indicated.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects for this study were students who had graduated from the Portland State University (PSU) Counselor Education Program in the years 1990 through 1994. One hundred ten students comprised the original sample. Students' files were selected from the admission list for the years 1988 through 1991. All files of students who were admitted to the program in these years were initially included in the sample. Due to missing data the final sample included files for only 66 graduates. Of these, 15 were admitted in 1988, 10 in 1989, 15 in 1990, and 26 in 1991.

The Counselor Education Program at PSU has three options for specialization in training, or program tracks. These are: Community Counseling, Rehabilitation Counseling, and School Counseling. Students from each specialization were represented in the sample, including 14 from the Rehabilitation specialization (21%), 27 from the Community specialization (41%), and 25 from the School specialization (38%).

Sixteen of the students were males and 50 were females. The mean age of the subjects was 44.1 years with a standard deviation of 7.87 years. Age ranged from a maximum age of 63 years to a minimum of 29 years.

Admission Criteria

The PSU Counselor Education Program currently uses a five-criteria admission model. Applicants are required to submit: (a) scores from either the MAT or the GRE, (b) their undergraduate cumulative GPA, (c) two recommendation forms, which are standardized letters of recommendation, (d) a panel interview, and (e) a writing sample. Each panel for the interview typically consists of one faculty member, an adjunct faculty member or practicing professional, and one student who is either currently enrolled in the program or is a graduate of the program. After the interview, the applicants complete a writing sample, answering one or two questions pertaining to their goals, experiences, and reasons for wanting to become a counselor.

Scores on four of these criteria are converted to a uniform scale ranging from 1 to 5 (three criteria) and 1 to 10 (one criterion). All scores, following this weighted system, are then combined to give a total score, upon which admission decisions are made. Whereas scores on the UGPA, MAT or GRE, and writing sample range from 1 to 5, the interview is weighted twice and ranges from 1 to 10.

The recommendation forms are not generally weighted. These forms ask the evaluator to rate the applicant on six variables: (a) academic potential, (b) dependability, (c) ability to work with others, (d) ability to express ideas orally, (e) breadth of general knowledge, and (f) professional success thus far, using a five-point scale ranging from "Poor" to "Excellent." These ratings may add a maximum of one point to the program total score if all ratings are "Excellent," or cause a deduction of points if the rater shows some concern on any of these six items (i.e., ratings of satisfactory or below) or feels that the applicant may not be an appropriate candidate for graduate study in counseling. If, for example, the evaluator scores a student as "Satisfactory," a half point is deducted from the total. A full point is deducted for a "Below Average" rating, and 1.5 points are deducted for a "Poor" rating. A sample of the recommendation form is presented in Appendix A.

Independent Variables

In this study nine independent variables (predictors) were examined. These included: (a) the year of admission; (b) age at admission, (c) gender, (d) interview score, (e) MAT/GRE score, (f) specialization, (g) undergraduate GPA (UGPA), (h) writing sample score, and (i) adjusted program admission total score. The following section describes the

four main independent variables used in this study (i.e., interview score, MAT/GRE score, UGPA, and writing sample score).

The Adjusted Program Admission Total Score

As described above, this score is a combination of the interview score, the MAT/GRE score, the writing sample, the UGPA, and, when applicable, letters of recommendation. These scores have all been converted to a common scale that includes the UGPA (range 1 to 5), the MAT or GRE score (range 1 to 5), the writing sample (range 1 to 5), the interview score (range 1 to 10), and the letters of recommendation (with a maximum of one point when all ratings are "Excellent").

The GRE/MAT Score

The Counselor Education Program does not require a minimum GRE or MAT cutoff score for admission. Instead, the program uses a formula to convert the scores and assigns points according to the five-point scale. The scores that were used for this study were the actual (i.e., raw) scores on the combined verbal and quantitative portions of the GRE and the MAT scores. The vast majority of the subjects (82% in the original sample) submitted MAT scores and the remaining (18%) GRE scores. For the purpose of this study, these scores were combined and called MAT scores in the data analysis. This was accomplished by using half of the GRE

total score and dividing by 10. For example, a total GRE score of 1,200 would be entered into the MAT sample as a score of 60. The conversion formulas used by the faculty to convert the scores for use in the total adjusted score are presented in Appendix B. The maximum score possible on the MAT is 100 points.

The Interview Score

This score is based on the personal interview, in which one student is typically interviewed by a three-person panel consisting of a full-time faculty member, an adjunct faculty or practicing professional, and a present or a graduated student. At the conclusion of each interview, the interviewers rate the applicant based on their perceptions of the applicant's self awareness, dedication to the field of counseling, communication skills, and experience.

Undergraduate Grade Point Average (UGPA)

The applicant's undergraduate GPA is converted to a five-point scale and the converted score is included in the total adjusted score. For example, a 4.00 UGPA is converted to five points, a 3.50 UGPA is converted to four points, and so on. The formula for this conversion is presented in Appendix B. For the purpose of this study the actual UGPA was used in the statistical analysis. The converted score is included only as a part of the total adjusted score.

The Writing Sample

Upon completion of the writing sample, two faculty members read the samples and rate them on a five-point scale. Criteria used by faculty for ratings include content, organization, and technicalities. For the statistical analysis in this study, the writing sample score given by the faculty was used. This is the same score that is included in the total adjusted score.

Dependent Variables

Graduate Grade Point Average (GGPA)

The first dependent variable used in this study was the graduate GPA, as calculated by the Office of the Registrar at PSU and recorded on each student's transcript. The required number of credits for graduation was 72, although some students completed more hours prior to graduation.

Clinical Skills Score

At Portland State University the Counselor Education Program is organized in a three-year sequence. During the first year students generally enroll in classes in general counseling theory and skills, and begin to take courses directly related to their specialty area. In the second year students continue to take course work in their specialty area but also work once a week in an on-site community counseling clinic. During this practicum

experience, students work with clients on a weekly basis. The students are observed and supervised by a faculty member and periodically by students in their third year who are also completing their internship.

During the program's third year, the internship year, students work at community sites directly related to their specialty area. Students in the School track intern at schools in the area, students in the Rehabilitation track work in various rehabilitation facilities, and students in the Community track work at community counseling agencies. The students are supervised by faculty who make site visits, and on-site supervisors who evaluate the student's progress and report it quarterly to the faculty.

The clinical skills score used in this study is a combination of ratings by faculty who observed the students directly during the practicum (second) year, or who supervised students during their internship (third) year. There was one exception to this practice. One of the faculty members, who supervised students in practicum, died before this study was conducted. This faculty member, however, had an adjunct faculty assistant who observed and supervised students during their practicum year. The ratings of this assistant were used for those students.

Procedure

Once the original sample of 110 graduate files had been selected, data collection on the dependent and independent variables began. Except for one of the dependent variables, clinical skills score, information on all the variables was attainable from the Office of the Registrar, or from the Counselor Education Program's records of admissions. Permission was attained from the Human Subjects Committee to record these scores for the purpose of this study on the condition that the data are kept anonymous, that is, the names of the students to whom the data are related will be kept only with the student researcher's advisor. The data collected included students' age at admission, gender, program track, undergraduate GPA (both actual and converted), graduate GPA, scores on the interview and writing sample, MAT or GRE scores (both actual and converted), letters of recommendation (where applicable), and total computed score.

In order to arrive at the clinical skills scores, a questionnaire was created to secure the faculty's ratings of students on this variable. An example of this questionnaire is presented in Appendix C. Faculty were asked to rate those students whom they had supervised or directly observed during either their practicum or internship experience or, in several cases, both. The rating was based on a scale ranging from 1 to 10 with a rating of 5 representing the

clinical skills of the average student they had supervised. Faculty rated the students on their skills in practicum and internship separately. These ratings were then averaged when two or more scores were available (i.e., one for practicum, one for internship).

There were eight faculty or supervisor raters, each rated an average of 13 students. The mean of their total ratings was 7.22. The maximum average rating among the faculty raters was 9 and the minimum average was 5.8. The scores were then adjusted to a group mean of six by transforming the scores of those faculty with higher means than six. This was done by simply subtracting a constant from each individual rating by those faculty whose average was at least one point above the mean. For example, if the faculty member had a mean rate of eight, each score he or she had given was reduced by two. Four of the eight faculty raters had their ratings reduced by at least one point.

The decrease in sample size from the original 110 to 66 files was due to several factors. First, some of the students who were admitted into the program dropped out before graduating. Second, a good number of students were not rated by faculty raters on their clinical skills. Third, for some students one of the other dependent variables was not attainable. Those students for whom these limitations applied were removed from the sample.

Once the data had been obtained, they were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program for Windows (SPSS, 1993) and statistically analyzed to determine the validity of the independent variables in predicting the two dependent (outcome) variables, namely graduate GPA and clinical skills score.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether or not the admission criteria used by the Counselor Education Program at Portland State University validly predict students' success in the program, using the definition of success described in this paper. Predictive validity would be demonstrated by the finding of a positive correlation between the admission criteria and the two outcome measures.

Table 1 lists the means and standard deviations of the variables used in this study.

In order to evaluate the correlation between the variables, a Pearson correlation coefficients matrix was generated. Statistically significant correlations were found between GGPA and age (r = .34, p = .005), GGPA and MAT score (r = .59, $p \leq .001$), GGPA and the program's total adjusted score (r = .49, $p \leq .001$). The program's total adjusted score also correlated with the clinical skills score (r = .34, p =.005), and the MAT score (r = .32, p = .009).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable	Mean	SD
Independent:		
Age at admission	44.07	7.874
Interview Score	8.95	.972
MAT	57.00	15.711
Program's Adjusted Total Score	19.56	1.801
UGPA	3.23	.365
Writing Sample Score	3.98	.574
Dependent:		
GGPA	3.86	.116
Clinical Skills Score (adjusted)	6.34	1.546

Note: n = 66 for all the variables.

Interesting to note, although the correlation did not reach statistical significance, gender was negatively correlated with GGPA (r = -.2285, p = .065), that is, being female correlated with higher GGPA.

The bivariate correlation between the two outcome measures, GGPA and clinical skills score, was significant (r = .42, p =.0001).

The correlations between the independent variables are presented in Table 2 and correlations between the two dependent variables and the remaining independent variables are presented in Table 3.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for the Independent Variables

	AGE	GENDER	INTVIEW	MAT	TOTAL	UGPA	WRIT
AGE	1.000 p=.						
GENDER	-.1593 p=.201	1.000 p=.					
INTVIEW	.0015 p=.991	.1328 p=.288	1.000 p=.				
MAT	.4206 p=.0001	-.0023 p=.986	.1265 p=.311	1.000 p=.			
TOTAL	.3026 p=.014	.0616 p=.623	.4321 p=.0001	.5788 p=.0001	1.000 p=.		
UGPA	.0832 p=.507	.0312 p=.803	.0181 p=.885	.2436 p=.049	.5767 p=.000	1.000 p=.	
WRIT	.0210 p=.867	-.0560 p=.655	-.0112 p=.929	-.0028 p=.982	.2611 p=.034	-.0104 p=.934	1.000 p=.

Note: n = 66 for all variables

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Dependent and Independent Variables

	GGPA	CLINICAL SCORE	AGE	GENDER	INTVIEW	MAT	TOTAL	UGPA	WRIT
GGPA	1.000 p=	.4225 p=.0001	.3396 p=.005	-.2285 p=.065	.0634 p=.613	.5964 p=.0001	.4884 p=.0001	.1236 p=.323	.0549 p=.662
CLINICAL SCORE	.4225 p=.0001	1.000 p=	.1161 p=.353	-.0278 p=.825	.0471 p=.707	.3186 p=.009	.3391 p=.005	.1049 p=.402	-.0220 p=.861

Note: n = 66 for all variables.

In order to examine differences among the three tracks in admission criteria and outcome measures, analysis of variance was performed comparing the three specializations on each of the independent and dependent variables. Table 4 shows the results. No statistically significant differences were found, using ANOVA, among the three tracks on any of the measures.

The mean score for the writing sample was 3.23 with a standard deviation of .37. The maximum score in the sample was 5.00; the minimum was 2.90. The mean UGPA for this sample was 3.23 with a standard deviation of .37. The maximum UGPA was 4.00; the minimum was 2.44. The mean score for the actual scores on the MAT variable was 57 with a standard deviation of 15.71. The maximum was 96.00; the minimum was 24.00. The mean score for the interview was 8.95 with a standard deviation of .97. The maximum was 10.00; the minimum was 6.30.

A multiple regression analysis using the forward-entry stepwise method was computed to determine the best predictors of GGPA and clinical skills score separately. For the clinical skills score criterion; age, gender, interview score, MAT score, UGPA, and writing sample score served as predictor variables. Not a predictor variable, but also entered into the equation was GGPA. The stepwise regression equation revealed GGPA to be the most significant predictor of clinical skills score, $F(1, 64) = 13.904$,

p =.0004, R^2 = .178. When GGPA was removed from the list of predictor variables, MAT score alone entered into the equation, $F(1, 64) = 7.233$, p = .0091, R^2 = .102. No other variables met the criteria for entry into the equation.

Table 4

Analysis of Variance of Admission Criteria and Outcome Measures by Program Track

	Community	Rehabilitation	School	Alpha Level
INDEPENDENT VARIABLE:				
Age				
Mean	46.074	42.000	43.080	N/S
SD	8.87	8.27	6.12	
Interview				
Mean	8.941	9.136	8.852	N/S
SD	1.02	.87	.99	
MAT/GRE Score				
Mean	60.741	54.000	54.640	N/S
SD	16.23	14.11	15.76	
Total Adjusted Score				
Mean	19.825	19.014	19.582	N/S
SD	1.94	1.72	1.68	
UGPA				
Mean	3.254	3.159	3.232	N/S
SD	.39	.43	.30	
Writing Sample				
Mean	3.996	4.044	3.928	N/S
SD	.60	.57	.56	
DEPENDENT VARIABLE:				
GGPA				
Mean	3.89	3.82	3.87	N/S
SD	.11	.14	.10	
Clinical Score				
Mean	6.333	6.235	6.400	N/S
SD	1.53	1.90	1.39	

For the analysis of the GGPA criterion, age, gender, interview score, MAT score, UGPA, and writing sample score, were used as the predictor variables. MAT score entered the stepwise regression equation first, $F(1, 64) = 35.331$, $p \leq .0001$, $R^2 = .356$. Gender was also significant, $F(2, 63) = 21.643$, $p \leq .0001$, $R^2 = .407$, R^2 change = .052. None of the other variables met criteria for entry into the equation. When clinical skills score was added to the above list, it too was found to be a significant predictor of GGPA, $F(3, 62) = 17.912$, $p \leq .0001$, $R^2 = .416$. MAT score appears to be the strongest predictor of both dependent criteria, GGPA and clinical skills score. No other predictor variables approached significance.

Regarding gender, the results indicate that being female was positively correlated with the GGPA. Summary results of the multiple regression analysis for both dependent variables are presented in Tables 5 and 6. Only significant predictive independent variables are included in the table.

A Pearson correlation coefficient matrix was also obtained using the separate practicum and internship faculty-supervisor rating means before they were combined into the clinical skills score. When using the practicum rating mean as the dependent variable, none of the independent variables was found to significantly predict it. Using the internship score mean as the dependent variable

produced only one significant correlation, for MAT score (r = .39, p = .015).

Table 5

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Clinical Skills Score

Variable	R	R^2	Beta	F	p
MAT	.318	.101	.319	7.233	.0091

Note. Age at admission, gender, interview score, UGPA, and writing sample score were also entered into the analysis but were not found to be predictive of clinical skills score.

Table 6

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for GGPA

Variable	R	R^2	R^2 Change	Beta	F	p
MAT	.596	.356		.596	35.331	.0001
Gender	.681	.464	.108	-.220	17.912	.0001

Note. Age at admission, interview score, UGPA, and writing sample score were also entered into the analysis but were not found to be predictive of GGPA.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This investigation sought to empirically test the predictive validity of four of the five admission criteria currently used by the Counselor Education Program at Portland State University.

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to determine the relationships between the five admission criteria and the two outcome measures, graduate GPA and clinical skills score. The results of this analysis showed statistically significant bivariate correlations between GGPA and: (a) Age at admission (r = .34, p = .005); (b) program total adjusted score (r = .49, p = .0001); and (c) MAT score (r = .60, p = .0001). For the clinical skills score there were significant correlations with: (a) program total adjusted score (r = .34, p =.005); and (b) MAT score (r = .32, p = .009).

Multiple regression analysis, however, indicated that the only significant predictors of GGPA were the MAT score and gender, and the single significant predictor of clinical skills score was the MAT score. The GGPA and the clinical skills score were also significantly correlated with each other (r = .42, p = .0001). The remaining variables, UGPA,

writing sample score, and interview score, did not statistically predict scores on the two outcome measures.

Certainly, taken from this view, the findings of this study may be considered surprising. It was anticipated that the admission criteria would be helpful in predicting outcome measures, such as GPA upon graduation and clinical skills. Yet in this study, taken at face value, this does not seem to be the case. Further discussion of the variables chosen and several limitations of the study need to be considered.

In looking at the dependent measures, one must ask whether the ones selected for use in this study, GGPA and clinical skills score, are in themselves, and as defined by this study, the most appropriate means of measuring graduate counseling success.

Grade point average remains one of the most heavily weighted measures of success in any level of schooling. The graduate GPA seems an appropriate measure to use in a study such as this as long as the former statement is true. Further, it makes sense intuitively that the MAT (or GRE) would predict this to some degree. It seems, in the same vein, that undergraduate GPA, and perhaps the writing sample, would be good predictors of academic performance at the graduate level, yet they were not. Age was correlated with the GGPA using bivariate Pearson correlation, which may suggest that life experience is a helpful predictor,

however, this correlation disappeared in the multiple regression analysis.

The clinical skills score is a less traditional measure, especially as used in this study, and requires closer examination. In a counseling situation a counselor is expected to perform a number of separate, but associated, tasks at the same time. These include, for example, listening, paraphrasing, challenging, supporting, suggesting, and so on. Intuitively, one would think that "people skills," such as those demonstrated in the interview, or perhaps creativity and the ability to think on one's feet, as might be demonstrated in the writing sample exercise, would prove more effective predictors than a test of academic ability and aptitude, such as the MAT. It seems most unusual that neither of these measures was predictive of clinical skills score.

When multiple regression analysis was performed using the two components of the clinical skills score separately, the practicum rating mean and the internship rating mean, it was found that not even the MAT scores predicted practicum mean ratings with any significance. The internship mean rating was significantly correlated with the MAT score alone. When these two variables, internship rating mean and practicum rating mean were entered as predictor variables, using the GGPA score as an outcome measure, only the MAT score (r = .45, p = .005) and internship rating mean

(r = .36, p = .01) were found to be significantly correlated with it.

It seems most unusual that MAT scores would predict clinical success, but perhaps even more interesting that none of the considered variables predicted clinical skill ratings during the practicum year. Hosford, Johnson, and Atkinson (1984) found similar results in their previously cited study. In that study MAT scores and the verbal section of the GRE were the only variables, of those considered, which significantly correlated with faculty rankings of academic success. Neither of these test scores, however, nor any of the other variables considered, predicted faculty rankings of either counseling competence as a trainee or anticipated success as a professional.

Significant bivariate correlations were found between the program total adjusted score and the two outcome measures, GGPA (r = .49, p =.0001) and the clinical skills score (r = .34, p =.005). This finding suggests that despite the failure of most of the independent variables to separately predict academic and clinical outcomes, in combination and due mainly to variance contributed by MAT scores, the composite admission score correlates moderately with the two outcome measures.

Limitations

Several limitations to the present study need to be noted. The present study could only relate successful performance to scores on admission criteria for students admitted to the program. As a result, variances of scores on most selection criteria were restricted, as was also the case with GGPA and the clinical skills score.

The clinical skills scores required faculty to recall information. In some cases raters were asked to recall the skills of students they had supervised as long as six years ago. The students who were admitted in 1988 would have done practicum in 1989, and internship in 1990. Memory recall of the specific skills over such long periods of time may well have affected these results. Further, as raters, the faculty were not trained on a standardized rating system, nor was inter-judge reliability obtained prior to the analysis of this sample. It may be that the adjustment of the mean clinical skills scores for some raters (four of the eight) affected the validity of the ratings. Also, the fact that one of the faculty members who directly supervised a number of the students in this sample died before this study was conducted, causing the use of an alternate, albeit very capable professional rater, may have had some effect on the outcome of these ratings.

It is also possible that the measure used in this study is not the most effective or sensitive for evaluating the

construct of clinical skills. As has been discussed earlier, defining a construct that includes such a variety of skills continues to be problematic.

While the use of the graduate GPA is a useful measure for many reasons, and a popular measure in such studies, a very real limitation to the measure is the restricted range it allows. In this study the graduate GPA range was from 3.53 to 4.00, and the mean was 3.86. Such a narrow range of variance is not conducive to separating students' ability in a significant way, and deleteriously affects results obtained from correlation studies.

Regarding the sample for this study a number of limitations must be considered. From the original sample of 110 student files, which included all of the students admitted into the program from 1988 through 1991, data from only 66 students were included in the data analysis. The loss of the data from the remaining 44 students certainly affected the results in a number of ways. Many of the students were not included because their clinical skills were not rated by faculty raters. It is impossible to say how the inclusion of the clinical skills scores of these students would have altered the results. Some students dropped out of the program before graduating for a variety of reasons. The MAT scores, interview scores, writing sample scores, and undergraduate GPA scores of these students were not included, yet they were admitted based on

the results of their total adjusted score, comprised of all of these. It would be interesting to examine whether there was any relationship, for example, between MAT scores and reasons for dropping out of the program.

Some consideration of selected independent variables is required also. As with the graduate GPA, the undergraduate GPA is also a fairly restricted measure, though to a lesser degree. In this study the undergraduate GPA did not significantly predict GGPA (r = .12, p = .32) or clinical skills score (r = .10, p = .40). As discussed by Hosford, Johnson, and Atkinson (1984), undergraduate GPA negatively correlated with overall success (as defined in that study) in graduate counselor education. It may be that, despite the intuitive appeal of the measure, it is not a robust predictor of graduate GPA or clinical skill attainment in graduate counseling programs. One reason might be that after completion of their undergraduate degree many people take time off to pursue careers before returning to graduate study. In the interim they may have developed more clearly defined career goals, for example, to become a professional counselor. This clarity of purpose and the fact that graduate education allows students a more focused course of study than does undergraduate education might enable students to perform better than when they were undergraduates. Another possibility, in this study, is that

those students with lower GPA's in graduate school left the program as a result, and so were not included in the sample.

Regarding the interview score, an important consideration is the ceiling effect. With a mean score for the sample on this variable of 8.95, the interview score may be very insensitive in the upper ranges to true differences between students. This is also a concern with the GGPA due to its small range of variance. Further, while the interview score is the most heavily weighted of the scores comprising the program's total adjusted score, its inclusion as a predictor of clinical skills might be inappropriate. The interview is extremely important because it gives those making admission decisions (i.e., the faculty) a chance to meet applicants and assess their mental health and level of functioning. This, not the assessment of clinical skills, is the main purpose of the interview. Therefore to suggest that the interview is used primarily as a predictor of clinical skill potential would be erroneous.

The writing sample score must also be mentioned as a possible limitation. It is only a very brief and possibly unrepresentative sample of work, and the criteria for scoring the writing sample may be ambiguous to the raters.

The use of the GRE and the MAT scores as equivalents in this study could also be seen as a possible limitation, although the GRE scores comprised only 18% of the total scores. The literature clearly shows that the GRE has

demonstrated questionable predictive validity in similar studies. Yet in this study the MAT/GRE combination score was the best predictor, and except for the correlation between gender and GGPA, the only predictor of both dependent variables.

Implications

Clearly, despite the many limitations and possible confounds involved in this study, and the similar findings in many of studies reviewed, these results are surprising and at least a little confusing. Taken at face value they suggest that the admission process requires a closer look. The fact that the MAT scores were found to reliably predict the GGPA is hopeful. That they are predictive of clinical skills perhaps suggests the need to examine the construct. The idea that the other admission criteria were found not to be predictive of GGPA or clinical skills score reinforces this need.

It may well be that the MAT is superior to the GRE as a predictor of the type of success evaluated in this study. Why this is the case, if it is, can only be guessed at. A topical consideration of what it is that the MAT measures may provide some answers. Certainly the MAT measures vocabulary level. It is also feasible that it measures reading level, reasoning ability, the ability to form connections between abstracts, and a general aptitude with

language, to some extent, though overgeneralizations are dangerous. If these are in fact measured however, some correlation between this test and certain counseling skills can be surmised. It is a benefit, if not a requirement, for a counselor to be proficient in communication and the expression and reception of ideas, the use of language, the ability to form connections and relationships. Therefore, a connection between success on the MAT and "success" on a rating of counseling skill is reasonable.

The interview, writing sample, letters of reference, and undergraduate GPA also seem logical measures to evaluate the skills that are required of a counseling student (e.g., ability to communicate and express one's ideas and feelings, dedication to academic work, creativity, intelligence, and dedication to the field). In this case, however, they failed to demonstrate the capacity to predict the rated success of these skills, or of the graduate GPA.

As with some of the studies cited in the literature review, these results suggest the need to continue the search for measures that are truly predictive of counseling skills, or the potential to develop them. As studies continue to point out the shortcomings of these measures, the need for more appropriate admission criteria becomes clear. But a better definition of what it is that departments of counselor education are trying to measure is concurrently required.

Recommendations that stem from the present study's limitations, and which should be considered in similar future studies must be noted. For the internship students, the on-site supervisor's ratings would be most valuable, and although evaluations are performed and reported to the faculty every term, the input of these supervisors could, in the future, be included directly as an added source of information in a similar study. On the other hand, the communication between students during their internship year faculty supervisors and on-site supervisors is quite regular. Similarly, while the clinical skill ratings by advanced student supervisors (i.e., intern students) of practicum students could potentially be added in such a study for a more comprehensive and possibly accurate rating, the faculty supervisors are direct observers and more experienced evaluators of clinical skills.

An option that needs to be considered is a redefinition of the clinical skills construct that would take into consideration professional success after graduation from the program. Professional success, however, could not necessarily be said to correlate with successful work with clients. Another consideration in terms of the clinical skills construct would be to include clients' ratings of the counselor in addition to the ratings of the faculty. The relationship with the client, the helping of the client, is, after all, the true measure of counseling success, without

which any other evaluation becomes irrelevant. The key, therefore, to refining the construct and to determining effective admission criteria lies within this relationship.

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APPENDIX A

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION FORM

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Education

Post Office Box 751
Portland, OR 97207

COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM
EVALUATION OF APPLICANT FOR GRADUATE STUDIES

Name of Applicant _____ SS# _____

Term for which you are applying _____ Program Track _____

****

Name of person completing this form _____

Position _____ Location _____ Phone _____

Relation to applicant _____ Length of time _____

Please allow us to thank you in advance for your help. This information is used for making decisions on admissions and also for planning a program of studies. Therefore, a careful discrimination between strong and weak characteristics is, in the long run, more helpful to the applicant than routine praise.

	Poor	Below average	Satis-factory	Good	Excellent	No basis for judgement
Academic Potential						
Dependability						
Ability to express ideas orally						
Ability to work with others						
Breadth of general knowledge						
Professional success thus far						

Please use the space on the reverse side to comment on your perception of the individual's strengths as a professional counselor.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Return this form BEFORE FEBRUARY 1st to:

Counselor Education Admissions
Portland State University
School of Education
PO Box 751
Portland, OR 97207-0751

1/94

APPENDIX B

CONVERSION FORMULAE FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATION APPLICANT SCORES

CONVERSION FORMULAE FOR
COUNSELOR EDUCATION APPLICANT SCORES

I. MAT Conversion

y = x/20

Examples: (MAT = 20) y1 = 20/20 = 1
(MAT = 50) y2 = 50/20 = 2.5
(Range = 0 - 5)

GRE Conversion

y = (x - 500)/200

Examples: (GRE = 800) y1 = (800-500)/200 = 300/200 = 1.5
(GRE = 1300) y2 = (1300-500)/200 =800/200= 4
(Range = 0-5)

II. GPA Conversion

y = x(4) - 10

Examples: (GPA = 2.75) y1 = 2.75(4) -10 = 11-10 = 1
(GPA = 3.50) y2 = 3.50(4) -10 = 14-10 = 4
(Range = 0-6)

III. Evaluation (Recommendation) Form Conversion

For each form:
1. Count number of "Good" checkmarks; assign 0 to each
2. Count number of "Excellent" checkmarks; assign 1 to each
3. Add all 0's and 1's from previous steps.
4. Average total score across all 0's and 1's (Do not assign any value to "No basis for judgement" category) (Range at this stage 0-1)
5. Subtract from above score the following:
   a. 0.5 for each "satisfactory" mark
   b. 1 for each "below average" mark
   c. 2 for each "poor" mark
   (Range = - (minus) score - +1)
6. Average across number of evaluation forms

IV. Interview Scoring

Average total interview score (range = 0-10) across number of interviewers (final range = 0-10)

V. Writing Sample Scoring

Average writing sample score (range = 0-5) across number (usually 2) of readers (final range = 0-5)

APPENDIX C

FACULTY RATER QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Evaluation by Practicum and Internship Supervisors at Portland State University

For the purpose of evaluating the predictive validity of the admissions criteria of the PSU Counseling Program we are asking that practicum and internship* supervisors rate the identified student's "counseling skills." In order to help the raters, the following guidelines are offered from the PSU Practicum and Clinic Operation Handbook, which states that "there are many specific skills and strategies considered essential to the counseling process," and lists the following as some which the students "will be expected to be fluent in during practicum": Attending, Observation, Reflection, Questioning, Clarification, Interpretation, Confrontation, and Immediacy.

Please rate the identified student's counseling skills based on the PSU criteria, and the criteria you use as a student-counselor supervisor. Rate the student as compared to the other students you have supervised at Portland State University. Please circle only the one appropriate number and, when doing so, consider the entire range of the scale.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Anchor points to consider:

1 = bottom 10% of all students supervised.

5-6 = approximately at 50th percentile of all students supervised.

10 = top 10% of all students supervised.

* When evaluating student performance while in community based internship site, please feel free to incorporate the site supervisor's quarterly ratings, comments, and general feedback.