THE DEVELOPMENT AND FIELD TEST OF AN EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS

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The purpose of this study was to identify the major components of a secondary school counselor’s job and translate these job responsibilities into an instrument that could be used by school administrators to identifying high quality secondary school counselors during the employment interview. An extensive review of the existing literature was conducted and resulted in the identification of 37 competencies essential for defining a quality secondary school counselor. Each competency was assigned to one of four interrelated domains: knowledge of students, knowledge of school counseling, working with others, and informational competencies. Questions for the interview instrument were constructed to measure the essence of each competency.

A sample of 37 secondary school counselors was selected from school districts in the Kansas City metropolitan area to field-test the interview instrument. The secondary school counselors’ responses to each question were rated based on a scoring rubric comprised of three levels of responses. After completion of the interviews, administrators from each school district rated their respective secondary school counselors as either average or excellent.

Reliability of each of the scales on the interview instrument exceeded 0.90. Validity correlations were in excess of 0.52 for each scale and the total score for the instrument. The instrument was effective in separating effective from average secondary counselors as identified by their supervisors.

INTRODUCTION

The selection of staff members is one of the most important tasks in which school administrators engage (Applegate, 1987; Caldwell, 1993). Research indicates that the quality of the school staff has a strong and direct impact on the effectiveness of a school (Shirk, 1999). Errors made in the selection process have direct impact on the school and have far reaching consequences for students, administrators, other teachers, and the functioning of the school as a whole (Emley & Ebmeier, 1997, p. 1). Indeed, studies by Engel and Erion (1984) found that school administrators believed that hiring high quality staff members was central to the academic success of their schools.

Most school administrators are heavily dependent on an interview system for the selection of staff members. It has historically been the primary part of the hiring process (Eder, 1999) and is the most commonly used method to gather data about prospective employees (Ebmeier, 2003). Because of the heavy reliance on the selection interview, many researchers have investigated the components of the interview process. According to Schmitt (1976), there have been ten notable published reviews of the literature and many more modest efforts in the past five decades (Arvey & Campion, 1982; Eder & Buckley, 1988; Hakel, 1989; Harris, 1989; Mayfield, 1964; Schmitt, 1976; Ulrich & Trumbo, 1965; Webster, 1982; Wagner, 1949). Later studies utilizing meta-analysis took into account both published and unpublished validation research and concluded that the interview process is a valid
selection tool for identifying quality candidates (Conway, Jako, & Goodman, 1995; Cronshaw & Weisner, 1989; McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994).

Although there is extensive knowledge about interview techniques for classroom teachers, less is known about an effective process for interviewing and identifying quality school counselors. This lack of an extant research base contributes to many problems with school counselor selection. Few principals understand the guidance and counseling role and how it can contribute to student achievement, to school improvement, and to a positive school climate (Kaplan & Evans, 1999). In addition, many principals are unfamiliar with the national and state standards for preparing counselors and often view counselors as resources to be used to fulfill administrative needs and goals (Baker, 2001). Indeed, the school counselor’s role is not well understood, especially when contrasted with the better-defined jobs of classroom teacher or school psychologist (Austin, 2004).

To add more complexity, school counseling training programs have conflicting and often varied theoretical perspectives, and thus, have trained counselors differently (American School Counseling Association, 2003). School counselors began as vocational counselors nearly 100 years ago but have evolved to address all children in the comprehensive domains of academic, career, and personal/social development. During this evolution, differing philosophical perspectives developed between and among academic counselors, career counselors, and personal/social or mental health counselors regarding a school counselor’s role, function, purpose, and focus. These changes and varying models have left school counselors, school administrators, teachers, and parents in a state of confusion regarding the role of a school counselor (Hatch & Bowers, 2002).

The school counseling profession also continues to struggle with the assignment of quasi-administrative and non-counseling duties while attempting to institutionalize the appropriate role of school counselors (Dahir, Martin, & House, 2000). For example, almost one third of the sample of future administrators rated discipline as an important or highly important duty. This is contrary to ASCA’s guideline regarding using counselors as disciplinarians. Also, more than half of the participants indicated that record keeping was a significant duty. To ask school counselors to use their skills and knowledge simply to make schedule changes and administer tests is a misuse of their education (Coy, 1999). Just as pre-service training has varied for school counselors, so too have administrative expectations for school counselors based on administrative pre-service training (or lack of it) with regard to school counseling programs (Hatch & Bowers, 2002).

School counselors often engage in functions that are only remotely related to either their training or their professionally determined roles or activities (Baker, 1996). Scheduling, participation in disciplinary functions, and conducting clerical duties absorb much of a school counselor’s time (Fitch, et al., 2001). However, those duties are not considered core elements of a counselor’s role by the ASCA or by other school counselor organizations. The time that the school counselor spends performing non-counseling-related tasks compromises his or her ability to complete tasks that are associated with the training the individual received and with state and
national role standards. Both employers and employees are struggling with identifying what school counselors should know and be able to do.

In recent years, as school districts have decentralized the responsibility for personnel decisions and implemented wider, site-based management practices, the principal’s role in the personnel selection process has increased significantly (Seyfarth, 1996). Results from a school counselor selection study revealed that principals were the most influential persons when it came to hiring school counselors (Beale, 1995). Since the selection of school counselors determines in large measure the overall quality of school counseling programs, it is important that principals make sound hiring decisions.

The present study identifies the major components of a secondary school counselor’s job from the literature and national recommendations and then translates these job responsibilities into an interview instrument that school principals can use to identifying quality secondary school counselors.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Over the last few years, standards for the school counseling profession have emerged from professional organizations, educational institutions, and state certification offices. All of these organizations have added focus to the job responsibilities of the position.

*American School Counselor Association.* The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a worldwide nonprofit organization based in Alexandria, Virginia. Founded in 1952, ASCA supports school counselors’ efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social, and career development so they not only achieve success in school but also are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society. The association provides professional development, publications and other resources, research and advocacy to more than 15,000 professional school counselors around the globe (ASCA, 2004).

Since their introduction in 1997, the *ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs* have served as the single most legitimizing document in the history of the profession (Bowers, Hatch, & Schwallie-Giddis, 2001). This landmark document has been endorsed by national educational and professional organizations. The standards contain competencies and goals for students and serve as the foundation for the development of a comprehensive school-counseling program. ASCA’s National Standards have been widely used in designing content standards for students in school counseling programs (ASCA, 2003).

ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs is based upon three domains: academic development, career development, and personal/social development. There are nine standards for each domain. Each standard is followed by a list of student competencies, which enumerates desired student learning outcomes. The student competencies define the specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills that students should obtain or demonstrate as a result of participating in a
school-counseling program. The competencies offer a foundation for a standards-based program (National Standards for School Counseling Programs, 2003).

In 2001, ASCA brought together leaders in the field to create the next logical step, a national school counseling program model. This model addresses historical concerns, current challenges within the profession and assists counselor educators and practicing school counselors in planning for the future of their programs and the profession, all through one common lens. ASCA collaborated to develop the model after extensive review and synthesis of state, district and site models, bringing together the most important current concepts regarding school counseling programs (ASCA 2004). The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs, a handbook developed by ASCA, maximizes the full potential of the National Standards documents. The handbook directly addresses current education reform efforts, including the No Child Left Behind legislation (Hatch & Bowers, 2002). The handbook is written to reflect a comprehensive approach to program foundation, delivery, management and accountability. The model provides the mechanism with which school counselors can design, coordinate, implement, manage and evaluate their programs for students’ success. It provides a framework for the program components, the school counselor’s role in implementation and the underlying philosophies of leadership, advocacy and systemic change and answers the question, “What do school counselors do?” (ASCA, 2004)

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) was founded in 1987 with a broad base of support from governors, teacher unions and school board leaders, school administrators, college and university officials, business executives, foundations, and concerned citizens. NBPTS is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization governed by a 63-member board of directors, the majority of whom are teachers. NBPTS’s mission is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. They provide a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards; they also advocate related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American Education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers (NBPTS School Counseling Standards, 2002).

In 2000, NBPT organized a committee of school counselors and other educators with expertise in this field and began the process of developing advanced professional standards for school counselors of students ages 3 to 18+. The School Counseling Standards Committee was charged with translating the Five Core Propositions of the NBPTS into a standards document that defines outstanding practice in this field. The deliberations of the School Counseling Standards Committee were informed by various national and state initiatives on school counseling standards that have been operating concurrently with the development of NBPTS Standards. This NBPTS Standards document describes in observable form what accomplished school counselors should know and be able to do.
Eleven standards have been identified as commonalities that characterize the accomplished practice of school counselors. These standards are designed to capture the extensive and profound craft, artistry, proficiency, and understandings that contribute to the complex work that characterizes accomplished school counseling. The standards serve as the basis for National Board Certification in this field.

**National Board for Certified Counselors.** The National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc. (NBCC), an independent not-for-profit credentialing body, was incorporated in 1982 to establish and monitor a national certification system, to identify for professionals and the public those counselors who have voluntarily sought and obtained certification, and to maintain a register of those counselors. This process recognizes counselors who have met predetermined NBCC standards in their training, experience, and performance on the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE).

Created by the American Counseling Association (ACA), NBCC is an independent credentialing body with close ties to ACA. Since 1985, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) has accredited NBCC. NCCA is an independent national regulatory organization that monitors the credentialing processes of its member agencies. Accreditation by the commission represents the foremost organizational recognition in national certification.

**National Certified School Counselor.** The National Certified School Counselor (NCSC) credential was created as a result of the joint efforts of the ACA, ASCA, and NBCC. The NCSC specialty credential attests to the educational background, knowledge, skills, and competencies of the specialist in school counseling. The NCSC credential promotes the school counselor’s professional identity, visibility, and accountability on a national level; identifies those counselors who have met national professional school counseling standards; advances cooperation among school systems, professional organizations, and other credentialing professional development agencies; and encourages the professional growth of school counselors.

**Praxis Series.** The Praxis Series is an Education Testing Service program that provides tests and other services for states to use as part of their teacher certification process. The Praxis Series assessments are also used by colleges and universities to qualify individuals for entry into teacher education programs. A number of professional associations and organizations also use these tests. The School Guidance and Counseling test measures knowledge and skills required of the professional school counselor in relation to those developmental areas that constitute most of the work of the school counselor. The content of the test focuses on questions that relate to the following four major categories:

- Counseling and Guidance. Includes communication (dyadic counseling, small group counseling, classroom guidance), special populations, appraisal, and transition processes.
Consulting. Includes indirect services to students (consultation with school staff, families, and community agencies on such matters as interpersonal relations, human development, the curriculum, and the school climate).

• Coordinating. Includes management and organization, information acquisition and dissemination, and program evaluation.

• Professional Issues. Includes legal and ethical considerations that govern counseling functions and resources and activities that enhance the counselor’s own professional development.

The multiple-choice questions are intended to measure how the counselor skills and functions are applied to the following five areas of student development: Identity and Self-Concept, Interpersonal, Career and Leisure, Academic and Cognitive, Health and Physical Well-Being. (Educational Testing Service, 2003, p. 28)

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) was formed in 1981. The history of commitment to accreditation has been long and substantive by the American Counseling Association (ACA) and its respective divisions. School counselor education programs accredited by the CACREP are based on a common body of knowledge and skills that are assumed to underlie the practice of school counseling. These knowledge and skill areas comprise the curricular experiences outlined in the CACREP standards (Holcomb-McCoy, Bryan, & Rahill, 2002, p.2):

Transforming School Counseling Initiative. The American Association for Higher Education established in 1990 The Education Trust as a special project to encourage colleges and universities to support K-12 reform efforts. The Education Trust has grown into an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to make schools and college work for all of the young people they serve.

In 1996 The Education Trust, with support from the Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, began to identify what school counselors need to know to be able to help all students succeed academically. This initiative became known as the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI). Six universities and their K-12 school district partners were identified to redesign their school counselor education programs. These institutions have transformed their preparation programs so that they prepare school counselors to be advocates and leaders supporting student academic success. During the first phases of the effort, The Education Trust used systematic efforts to synthesize the best available knowledge in the broader fields of educational practitioners, professional counselors, scholars, and policy makers. The result was the identification of eight essential elements of change to target in transforming counselor education practice.

The Education Trust continues to provide technical assistance and acts as a consultant with the universities to facilitate their change efforts. They share information across the six funded sites, as well as with other universities, school
districts, and professional and community-based organizations. Furthermore, they have spread information about change strategies and the need for change through what they learned from the six sites. (Education Trust, 2000, p. 2)

**METHOD**

Documents derived from these professional organizations, university programs, and agencies charged with testing and certification served as the basis for identifying the major components of a school counselor’s job. An extensive review of the existing literature and various professional organizations' standards (briefly summarized above) was conducted and resulted in the identification of 37 competencies that seemingly are essential for being identified as a quality secondary school counselor. Each competency, as detailed in Table 1, must have appeared in the majority of publications from the organizations previously referenced or the extant literature. Questions for the interview instrument were constructed to measure the essence of each competency and scoring rubrics for each question were included. (See Table 2 for an example question and scoring rubric.)

A panel of eight currently practicing secondary school counselors in the Kansas City metropolitan area then critiqued the questions and scoring rubrics for content validity, readability, and clarity. The feedback was compared to the literature review and alterations were made to the interview instrument as needed.

Table 1 Counseling Domains/Competencies Serving as the Basis of the Questions as Evidenced in External Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain/Competency</th>
<th>Professional Organizations</th>
<th>University Programs</th>
<th>Testing and Certification Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Human Growth and Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Growth and Development</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories of Psychological Development</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptionality</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Career Development</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories of Career Development</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Planning and Decision Making</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment/Resources/Technology</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Academic Development</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in the Classroom</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Planning and Decision Making</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills for Learning</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of School Counseling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Knowledge of Theories/Methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling Theories and Techniques</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Counseling</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Counseling</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Intervention</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Program Components</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Delivery of School Counseling Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance Curriculum Delivered to All Students</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Student Planning</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To establish concurrent validity of the instrument, central office administrators responsible for the supervision of secondary school counselors in school districts in the Kansas City metropolitan area were contacted and asked to participate in this study. Four school districts agreed to participate in this research project. To ensure diversity in the interviewed sample, these administrators were asked to select secondary school counselors who were considered to be excellent school counselors and secondary school counselors who were considered to be average school counselors. The authors of this study were not aware of the ratings prior to the interviews.

Thirty-seven interviews of these nominated secondary school counselors were conducted over the telephone during a time period of two months. Interviews ranged
from 40 to 50 minutes in length and followed the same procedure. In addition to responses to the interview questions, participants were asked to respond to personal demographic information for this study: age, gender, race, highest educational level achieved, and years of secondary school counseling experience. After the interviews had been completed, the names and assigned identification numbers of the school counselors who participated in the study were sent to their respective central office administrator responsible for the supervision of school counselors. The central office administrator, who evaluated the counselor, assigned each participant a rating of either average or excellent.

Table 2 Example Questions with Rubrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe the physical growth and developmental characteristics of a high school adolescent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays a clear understanding of developmental patterns, exceptions, and extent that students follow patterns. Can cite examples of things that would be of interest to students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes generally accurate knowledge of age group’s developmental characteristics. Lacks sensitivity to individual differences within student groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays minimal knowledge of developmental characteristics. Sees students as an undifferentiated group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validity

Validity refers to whether an instrument measures what it claims to measure. Face validity, content validity, and concurrent validity were the approaches used to determine the overall validity of the interview instrument. The interview instrument appears to have face validity as determined by the evaluation of the questions and scoring rubrics by the expert panel of eight currently practicing secondary school counselors. The feedback from the expert panel was compared to the literature review, and alterations were made to the interview instrument as needed.

Content validity refers to the match between the items in the instrument and the underlying domain that the instrument is attempting to measure (McDaniel, 1994). To possess content validity, the instrument must represent the content material covered. For example, since the instrument is designed to identify high quality secondary school counselors, one would expect that the questions asked during the interview would be directly related to the qualities of an excellent secondary school counselor as opposed to general personality characteristics or duties of a principal. To serve as a foundation of interview question development, the competencies had to
have been identified by the following professional organizations or university programs and agencies charged with testing and certification: ASCA, Kansas Comprehensive School Counseling Program Model, CACREP, TSC, NBPTS, NBCC, NCSC, and Praxis Series – School Guidance and Counseling. Secondary school counselors currently working in the field evaluated the instrument for content validity.

To establish concurrent validity of the developed interview instrument, the scores obtained from the interview instrument were compared to ratings given by central office administrators responsible for the supervision of the school counselors who participated in the interview.

**Reliability**

The reliability of a given instrument refers to the extent to which the instrument can provide consistent measurements on repeated occasions. To increase reliability, scoring rubrics were developed for each question. Cronbach’s Alpha statistic was calculated to check for consistency of responses and to determine the reliability of the instrument. All sub-scores plus the total score had qualitatively “excellent” alpha reliabilities between 0.93 and 0.99.

**Description of the Sample**

The school counselor participants were obtained from four large suburban school districts in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Thirty-seven counselors, 12 (32.4%) male and 25 (67.6%) female, participated in this study. The average age of the participants was 51.91 (SD = 9.26) years, with a range from 30 to 63 years. Most of the participants had earned a master's degree (n = 31, 93.8%) and two (6.1%) had earned a doctorate degree. The participants’ years of experience as a practicing school counselor averaged 18.03 (SD = 10.13) years, with a range from four to 38 years. Most of the participants (87.7%) were Caucasian.

**RESULTS**

The objective of this study was to develop and field test an instrument designed to improve the chances of hiring quality secondary school counselors. Questions were developed based on the extant literature, professional group standards, requirements necessary for certification, and the curricular programs of preparatory universities. These interview questions represented four interrelated domains: knowledge of students, knowledge of school counseling, working with others, and informational competencies. Thirty-seven secondary school counselors’ responses to each of these interview questions were rated based on a scoring rubric comprised of three levels of responses (Level 3 = very effective response, Level 2 = effective response, and Level 1 = ineffective response). Lastly, school administrators assigned each of their respective school counselors a rating of either average or excellent.

Correlation coefficients were computed among the five research variables and are displayed in Table 3. The results of this analysis indicated all correlations were
statistically significant and were greater than or equal to .52. In addition, all the sub-scales were highly correlated as expected.

Table 3 Correlations Between Research Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Variables</th>
<th>Total Score for Instrument</th>
<th>Knowledge of Students</th>
<th>Knowledge of School Counseling</th>
<th>Working with Others</th>
<th>Informational Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator Rating</td>
<td>.60***</td>
<td>.52***</td>
<td>.58***</td>
<td>.62***</td>
<td>.59***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>.95***</td>
<td></td>
<td>.97***</td>
<td></td>
<td>.95***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Students</td>
<td></td>
<td>.89***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Counseling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.92***</td>
<td>.89***</td>
<td>.88***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.93***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n=37. ***p < .001.

A t-test was also calculated using each of the sub-scale scores and total score as the dependent variable with ratings of the secondary school counselor (excellent vs. average) serving as the categorical independent variable. Each of the five t-tests was statistically significant. Secondary school counselors rated as “excellent” had higher average scores on each of the five scores as compared to secondary school counselors who were rated as “average” as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4 t-tests on Research Variables by Rating, with Means and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Excellent Category</th>
<th>Average Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean SD</td>
<td>Mean SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score for Instrument</td>
<td>4.45***</td>
<td>87.09 18.92</td>
<td>59.29 17.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Students</td>
<td>3.63***</td>
<td>21.09 4.96</td>
<td>14.93 5.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of School Counseling</td>
<td>4.25***</td>
<td>30.39 7.51</td>
<td>20.57 5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Others</td>
<td>4.61***</td>
<td>21.52 4.52</td>
<td>14.29 4.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational Competencies</td>
<td>4.37***</td>
<td>14.09 3.09</td>
<td>9.50 3.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. df=35. ***p < .001.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the development of this interview instrument was to provide a tool to help administrators identify counselor candidates deemed effective. To that end, the instrument seems very suited. The validity correlations were very high for selection instruments. Indeed, the correlations were higher than common standardized
tests used for admission into colleges and various post-graduate professional schools.¹ These findings are supported by prior work of Shirk (1999), Evans (2004), Allshouse (2004), Longenecker (2005), Cowens (1999), and Emly and Ebmeier (1997) who used similar approaches to interviewing classroom teachers with excellent results. Collectively, these studies combined with the present study support the notion that selection instruments based upon job-related criteria and containing clear scoring rubrics can be very useful.

From examination of the demographic data collected during the interview, however, the counselor instrument appears to be biased in favor of younger candidates with more recent education. Given that these individuals are more recent graduates of university programs, which have likely adopted many of the newer standards upon which this instrument was based, this finding is expected. Obviously, care needs to be taken when interpreting scores from older secondary guidance counselor candidates. In addition, since the interview program was designed for secondary counselors, the utility of using the instrument without modification for elementary counselor positions is unknown. In addition to precautions about possible age bias, one must also be cognizant of the purpose of the counselor instrument. It was designed to identify secondary counselors considered effective by their supervisors. It was not constructed to predict other possible definitions of effectiveness such as residual gain on standardized tests, parent satisfaction, student satisfaction or career longevity.

Lastly, it not suggested that the process for selecting school counselors be reduced to a single 37 question structured interview. On the contrary, what was examined was a piece of a very complex puzzle. All of the data about an applicant should be considered within the context of the merit of each piece of the application puzzle. This effort was designed to improve the quality of one piece of the applicant’s portfolio of information so that, taken in total, a clear picture of his/her competence can be fairly and accurately assessed. The counselor interview described in this paper seems to possess good reliability and validity estimates, however, it should be only one piece of information upon which employment decisions are made.

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