

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes for the Counseling Psychology Program Summer, 2013

During the summer of 2013, faculty in the Counseling Psychology Program assessed the program's effectiveness in promoting mastery of key counseling skills and competencies during the practicum and internship training. Practicum and internship experiences are a critical facet of professional training for Counseling Psychology students because practicum and internship is where students develop and refine clinical skills and competencies in "real world" mental health agencies or settings. The faculty believe that the quality of Counseling Psychology students' performance when they finish their internship placement is a good indicator of how well the program achieves its goal of preparing students with counseling skills that are necessary to be able to work as a professional in mental health agencies or settings after graduation.

This report builds on the Counseling Psychology Program's evaluation of student learning outcomes conducted during the Spring 2006, Spring 2008, and Spring 2010 semesters. Previous evaluations of student learning outcomes showed that the Counseling Psychology Program was effective in meeting its goals for student learning.

Past evaluations of student learning outcomes presented findings related to the following 4 competency domains: **(1) competence in developing an interpersonal relationship with clients and clinical supervisors, (2) competence in clinical assessment, (3) competence in implementing counseling interventions, and (4) ethical and professional conduct in relationships with clients and agency colleagues.** The present report examines Counseling Psychology Program students' performance in these domains for 116 students who completed practicum and internship during the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 academic years.

Assessment of 4 Learning Outcomes

Between the 2002-2003 and 2012-2013 academic years, 355 students completed their practicum and internship training in 93 different community agencies. There were 116 students who completed Practicum and Internship during the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 academic years.

The present evaluation of the practicum and internship program assessed mastery and competence of these 116 students in the following 4 domains: (1)

competence in developing an interpersonal relationship with clients and clinical supervisors, (2) competence in clinical assessment, (3) competence in implementing counseling interventions, and (4) ethical and professional conduct in relationships with clients and agency colleagues.

The analyses also examined the degree of improvement in student competence in the 4 learning outcomes from the end of Practicum to the end of the second Internship course (approximately 9 months later). These findings provide information about the development of students' counseling skills and competencies during the 2-semester (600 hour) internship experience.

Finally, performance for this cohort of 116 students was compared to the 2 cohorts that were summarized in the 2008 and 2010 assessment reports. These findings provide information about whether there were significant changes in the level of student performance during the past decade.

Data for this evaluation were provided by clinical supervisors in community agencies where students completed their practicum and internship. These supervisors provided a written evaluation of each student's clinical performance at the end of the semester for Practicum, Internship I, and Internship II. Agency supervisors provided clinical supervision for Counseling Psychology Program students but, with only three exceptions, did not teach in the program or have any other affiliation with the program. Hence, supervisors could offer objective feedback about each student's strengths and weaknesses.

The Practicum/Internship evaluation form asks agency supervisors to rate a student's performance on 29 different counseling skills or competencies. Many of these skills are important, but they are not specified as learning outcomes in the Counseling Psychology Program's assessment plan. Even though the findings for those skills or competencies are not addressed in this report, the Counseling Psychology Program faculty evaluate the program's effectiveness in fostering students' development of all 29 counseling skills or competencies, and these findings are considered when faculty review the Counseling Psychology Program's curriculum.

The Practicum/Internship evaluation forms asked supervisors to "evaluate and compare the student to other students enrolled in masters-level counseling programs. 'Average' refers to typical performance." A 5-point rating scale was used to rate students' performance. The following items from the practicum and internship evaluation forms were selected for analysis for this assessment project:

Relationship skills include the ability to: a) communicate empathy, b) engage others, c) set others at ease, d) establish rapport, and e) communicate a sense of respect.

Assessment skills include: a) the ability to formulate the referral question, b) skill in selecting assessment methods or techniques (e.g., interviewing, observation, self-report measures), c) skill in collecting information and processing this information, and d) ability to integrate assessment information and develop a case formulation.

Intervention skills include: a) knowledge of various models of behavior disorders, b) knowledge of various therapeutic modalities and levels of care (e.g., inpatient, outpatient, day treatment), c) ability to select a treatment modality that matches the specific circumstances of the individual client, d) skill in applying the treatment techniques or plan, and e) ability to evaluate the efficacy of the intervention.

For **Ethical and professional conduct**, Counseling Psychology students are expected to demonstrate a) knowledge of the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association, b) the ability to identify potential ethical or professional problems, and c) to act in accordance with these ethical and professional standards.

Program Goals

The faculty set a goal that at least 80% of students would be rated by clinical supervisors as “average” or better for 3 skill or competency domains. These domains were (1) competence in developing an interpersonal relationship with clients and clinical supervisors, (2) competence in clinical assessment, and (3) competence in implementing counseling interventions. A higher goal was set for the domain of Ethical and Professional Conduct. For this domain, a goal was set that at least 95% of students would be rated as “average” or better. A very high goal was set for this domain because the Counseling Psychology Program faculty expect that students will always adhere to the ethical and professional standards of the profession.

Even though the primary focus is on students’ performance at the end of their internship experience, this assessment also examined students’ performance at the end of the practicum, and their improvement from that point through the end of the internship (roughly 9 months later).

Results

Overall, ratings by clinical supervisors in these community agencies indicate that these students demonstrated very high levels of mastery of important counseling skills. Students demonstrated high levels of mastery at the end of the practicum. Furthermore, they showed marked progress during the internship and demonstrated extremely high levels of mastery across all counseling competencies at the end of the internship.

These findings show that students are demonstrating high levels of counseling skills and competence at the end of the 10-week practicum. These results indicate that students are well prepared for the practicum experience. The Counseling Psychology Program emphasizes the development of students’ skills across the curriculum, and the supervisors’ ratings at the end of practicum indicate that the Counseling Psychology Program’s coursework prepares students to work as professionals in mental health agencies or settings.

During the internship experience, students continue to develop and refine these key counseling skills and competencies. At the end of the internship, students demonstrate a very high level of competence in these essential counseling skills and competencies.

Relationship Skills

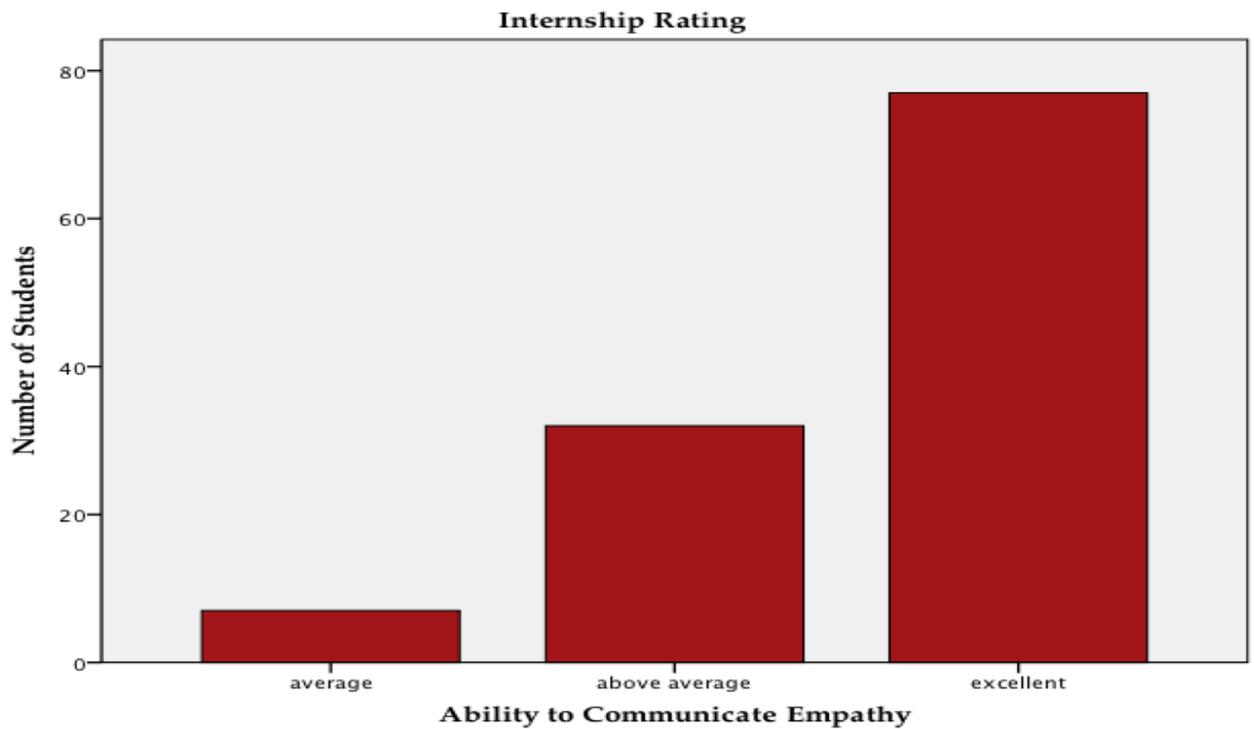
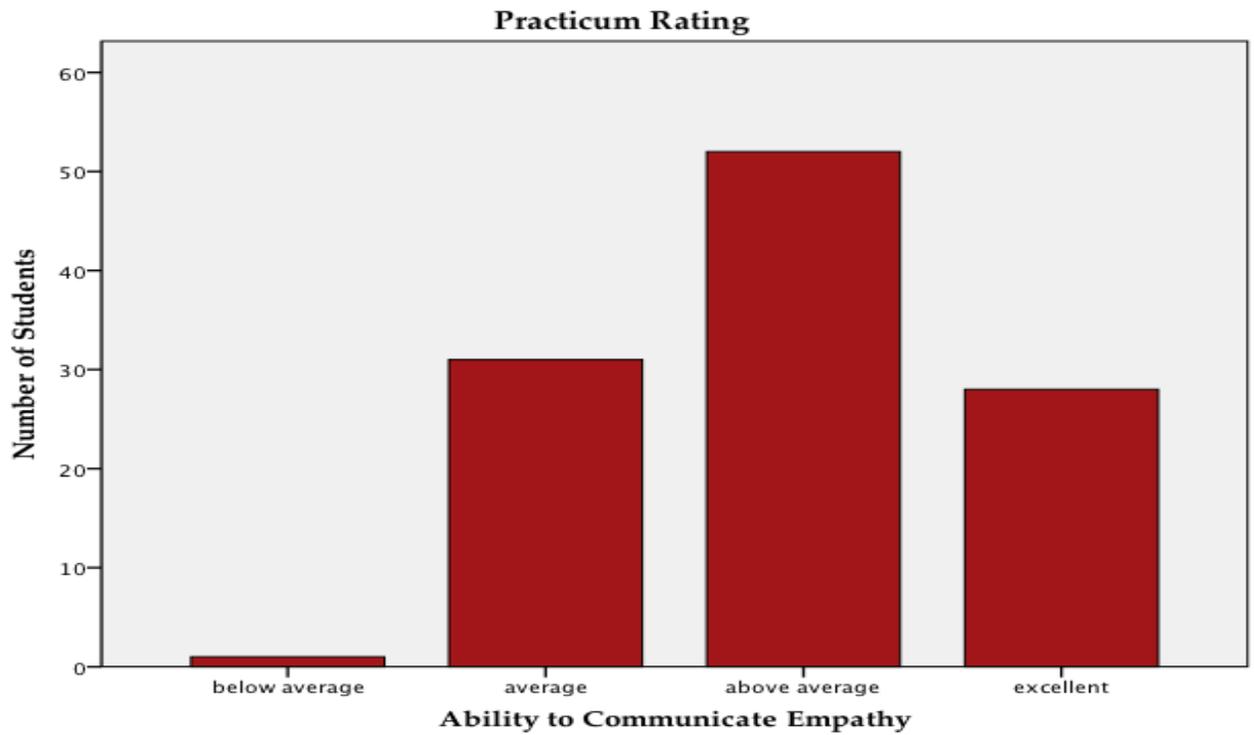
Five measures of competence in relationship skills were examined. The goal was that at least 80% of students achieve a rating of “average” or better for each competency at the end of the internship. Table 1 presents information for the percentage of students who demonstrated this level of mastery at the end of the practicum and the end of the internship.

Table 1

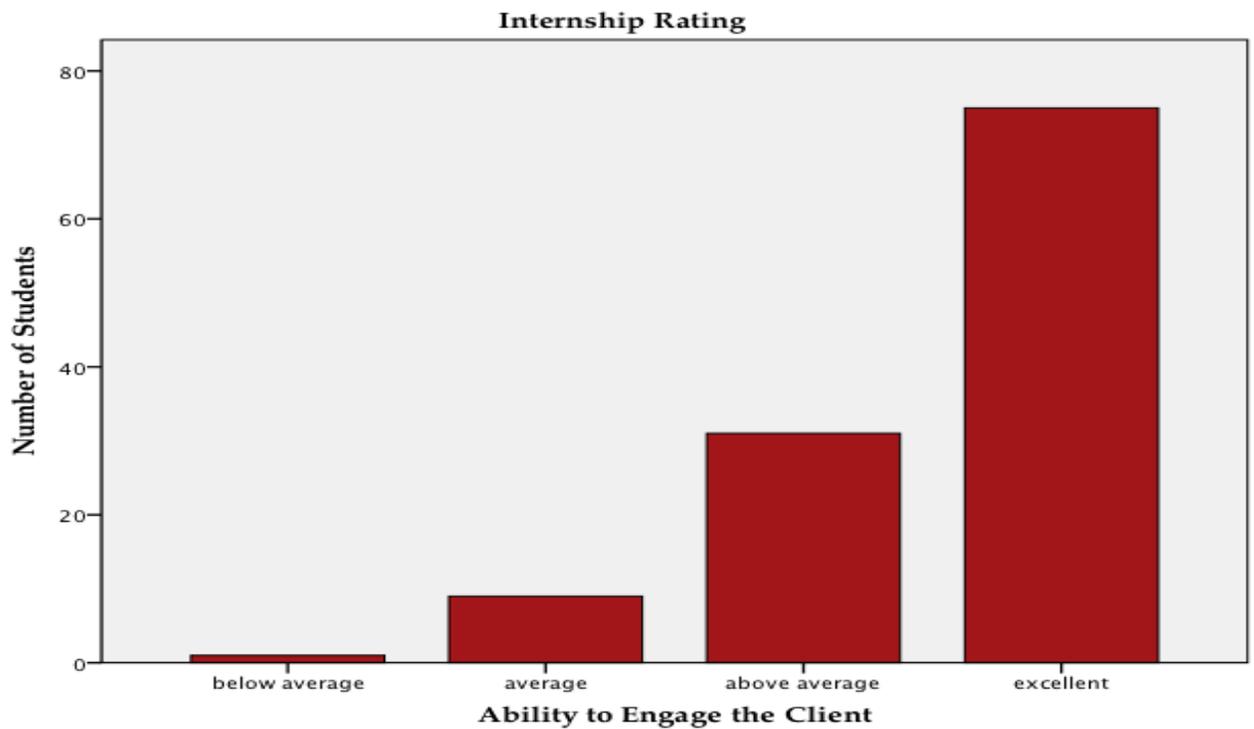
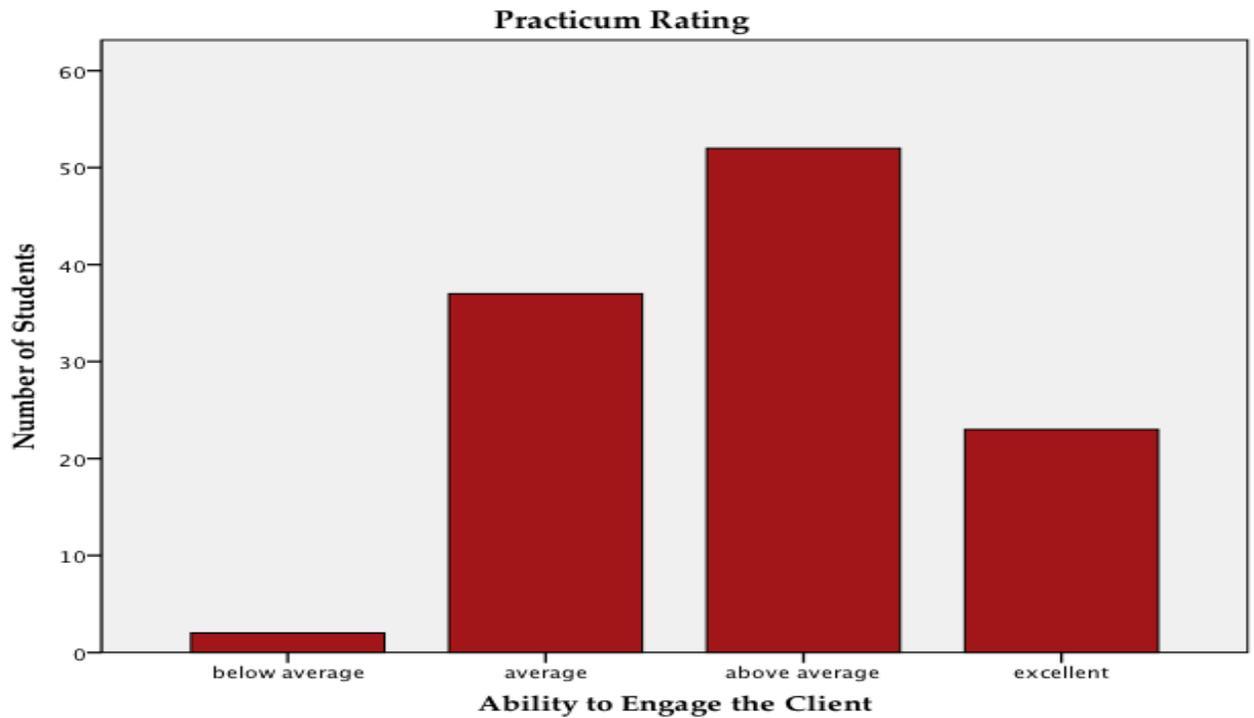
Relationship Skill	Practicum	Internship
Ability to Communicate Empathy	99%	100%
Ability to Engage the Client	98%	99%
Ability to Set the Client at Ease	98%	99%
Ability to Establish Rapport with the Client	97%	99%
Ability to Communicate a Sense of Respect to the Client	98%	95%

Histograms showing the number of students who were rated by clinical supervisors as demonstrating “average,” “above average,” or “excellent” levels of performance for each relationship skill are presented below.

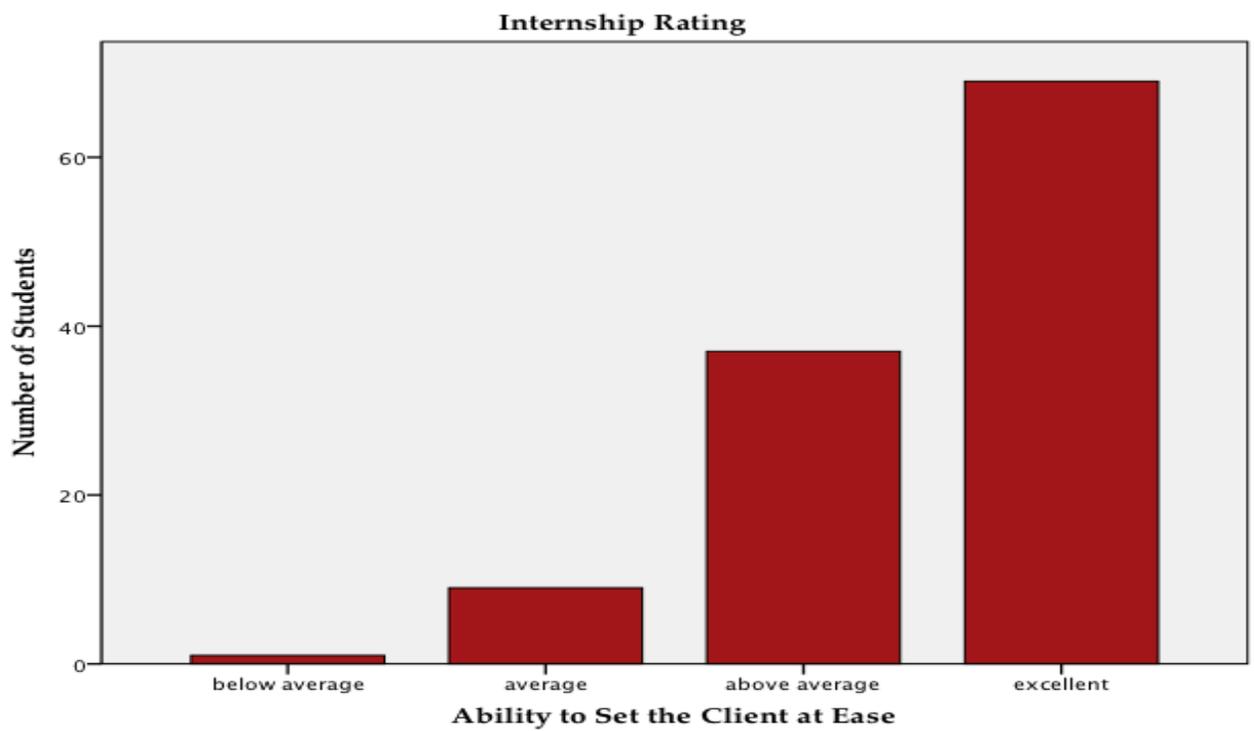
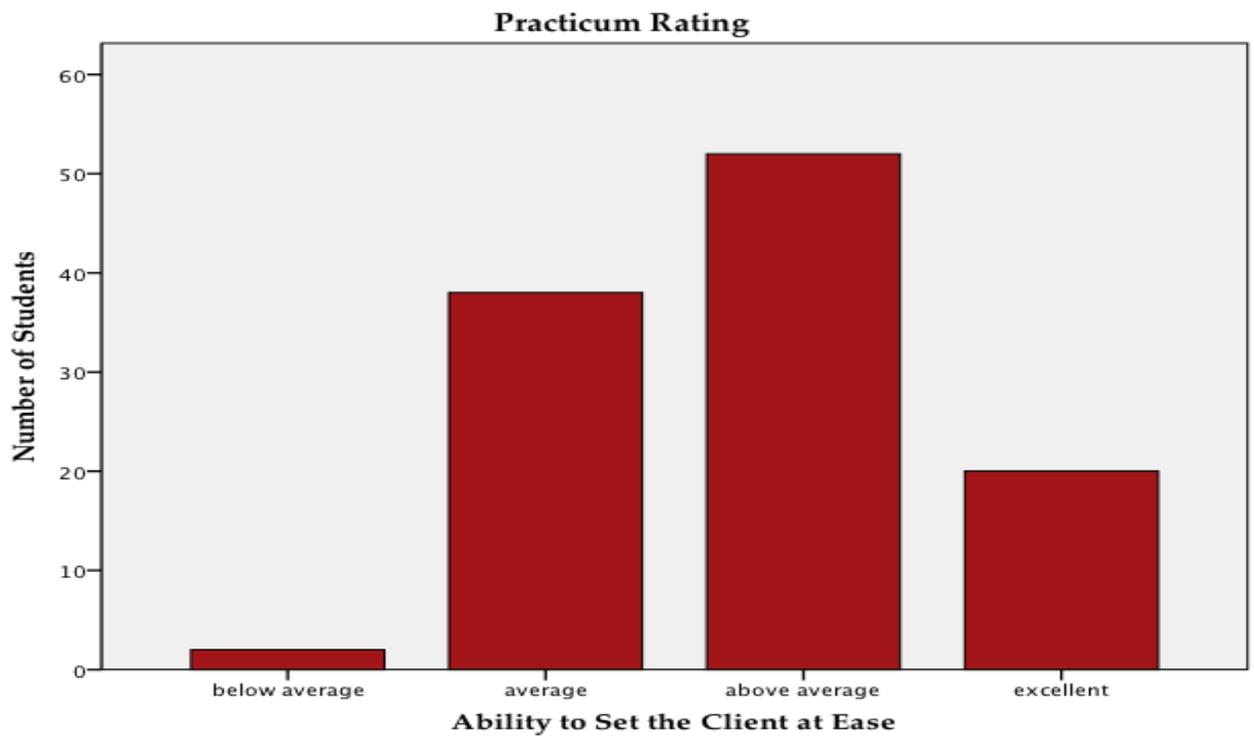
Ability to Communicate Empathy



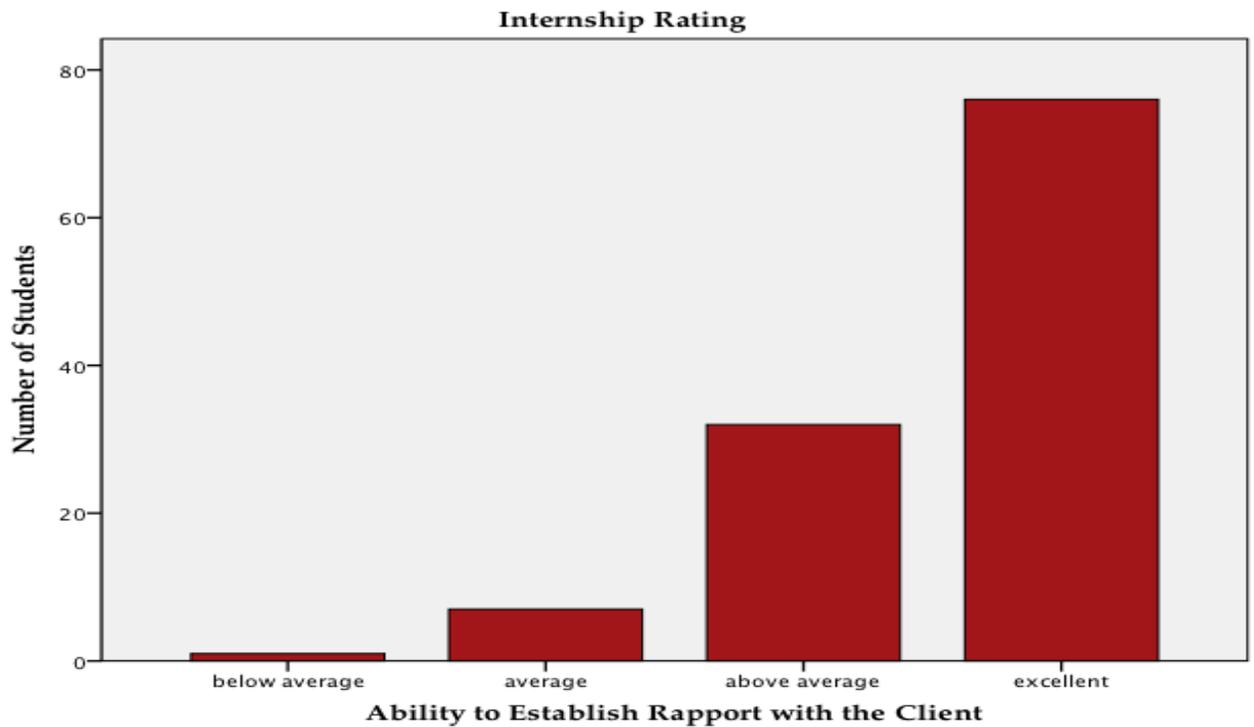
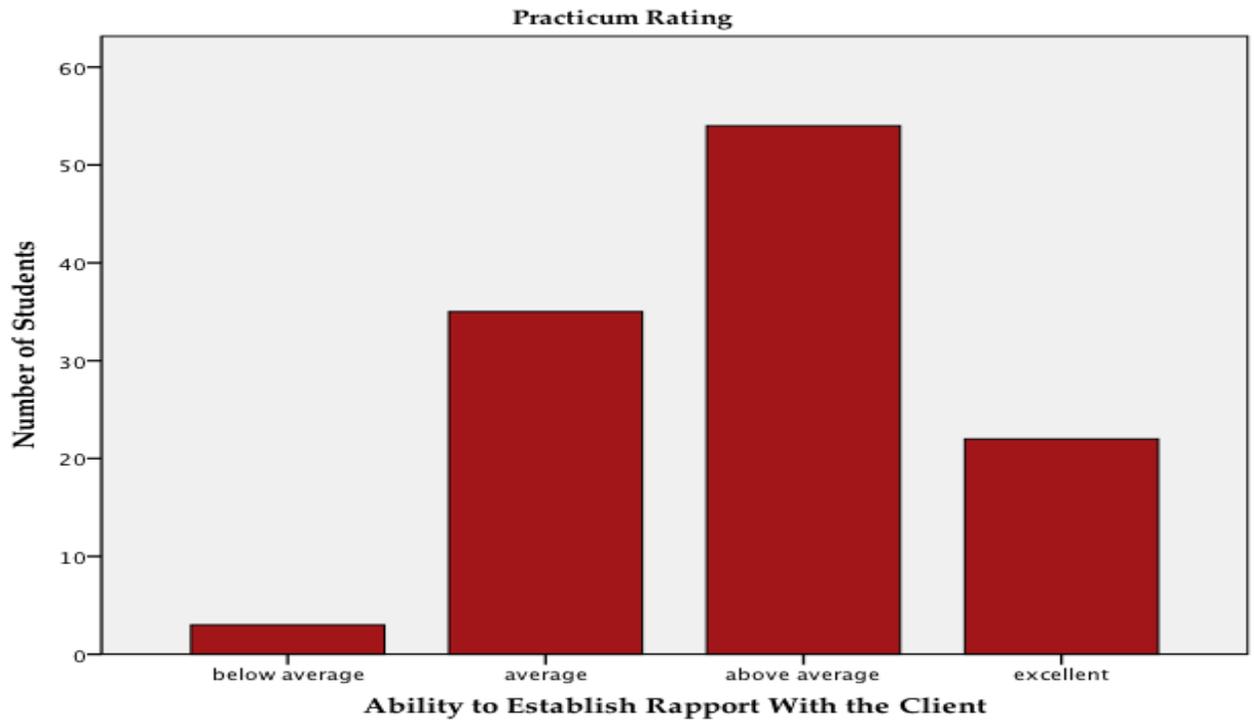
Ability to Engage the Client



Ability to Set the Client at Ease



Ability to Establish Rapport with the Client



Ability to Communicate a Sense Of Respect to the Client

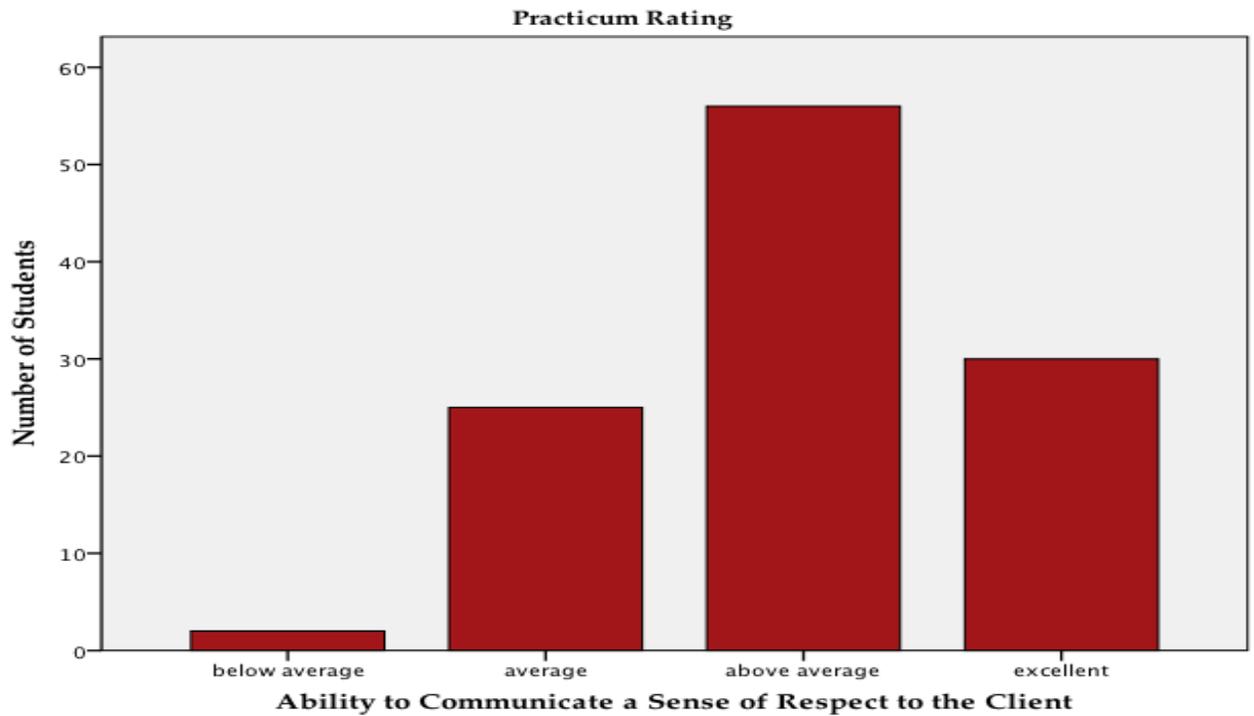


Table 2 presents the mean scores for the 5 measures of competence in relationship skills. A 5-point rating scale was used to rate students' performance, with 3 = "average," 4 = "above average," and 5 = "excellent."

Table 2
Mean Supervisor Ratings for Relationship Skills

Relationship Skill	Practicum	Internship
Ability to Communicate Empathy	3.96	4.62
Ability to Engage the Client	3.84	4.56
Ability to Set the Client at Ease	3.80	4.51
Ability to Establish Rapport with the Client	3.83	4.59
Ability to Communicate a Sense of Respect to the Client	4.01	4.65

Assessment Skills

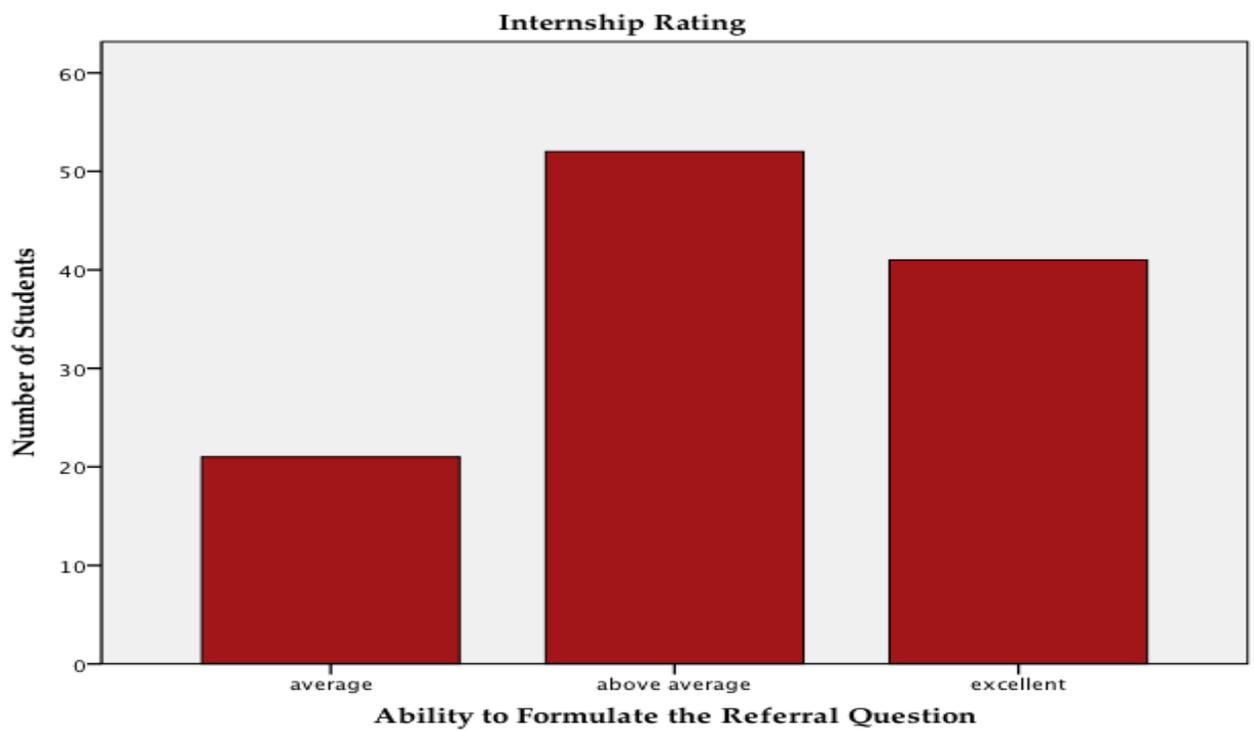
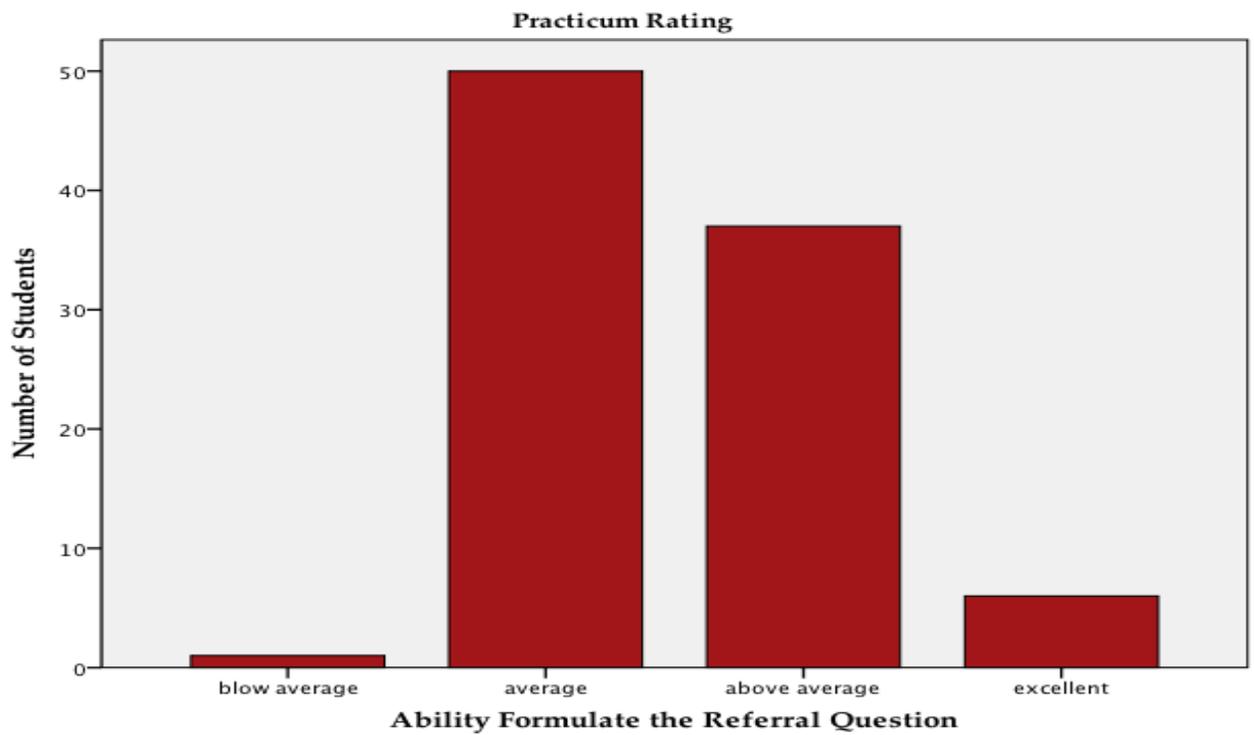
Four measures of competence in assessment skills were examined. The goal was that at least 80% of students achieve a rating of “average” or better for each competency at the end of the internship. Table 3 presents information for the percentage of students who demonstrated this level of mastery at the end of the practicum and the end of the internship.

Table 3

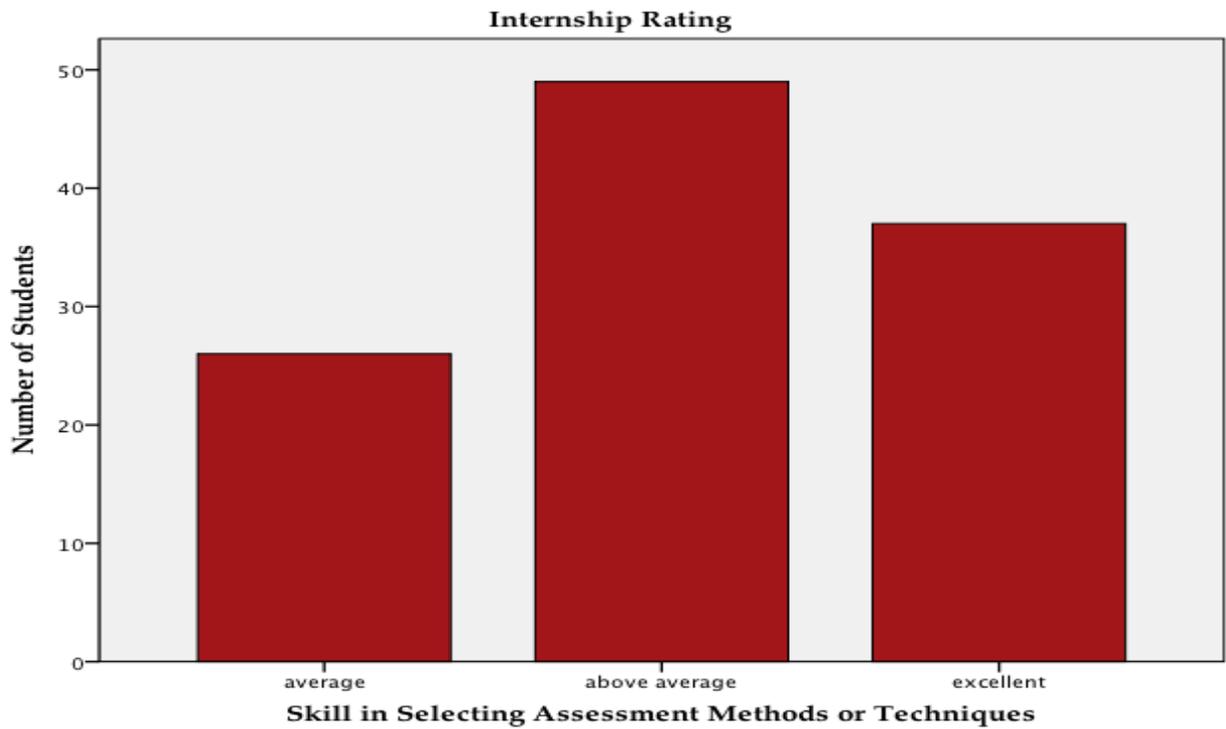
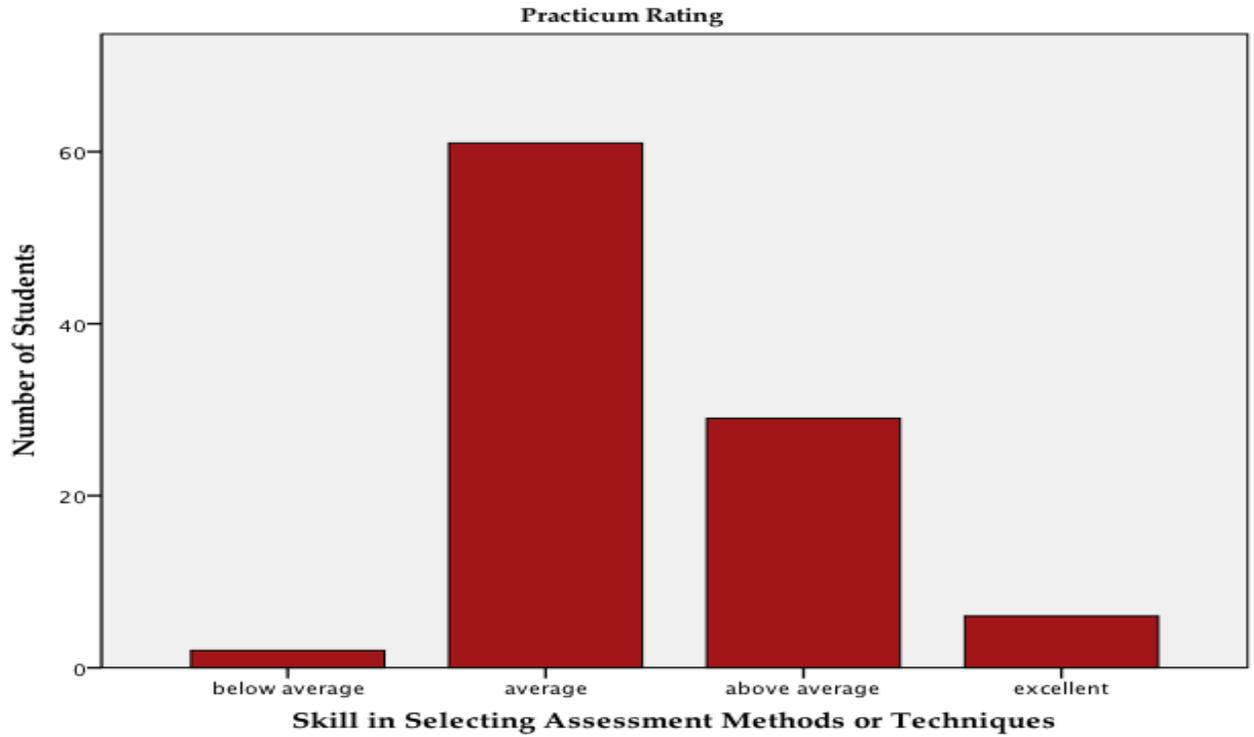
Assessment Skill	Practicum	Internship
Ability to Formulate the Referral Question	99%	100%
Skill in Selecting Assessment Methods or Techniques	98%	100%
Skill in Collecting Assessment Information	98%	100%
Ability to Integrate Assessment Information and Develop a Case Formulation	99%	99%

Histograms showing the number of students who were rated by clinical supervisors as demonstrating “average,” “above average,” or “excellent” levels of performance for each assessment skill are presented below.

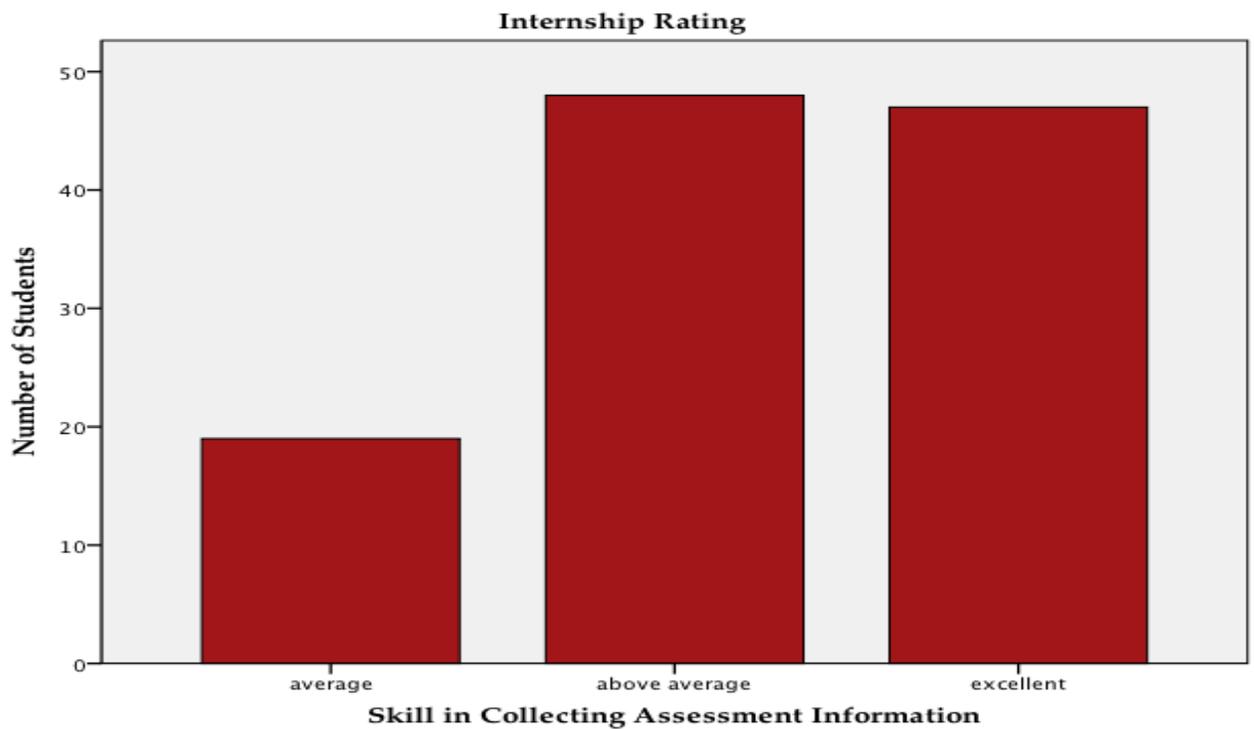
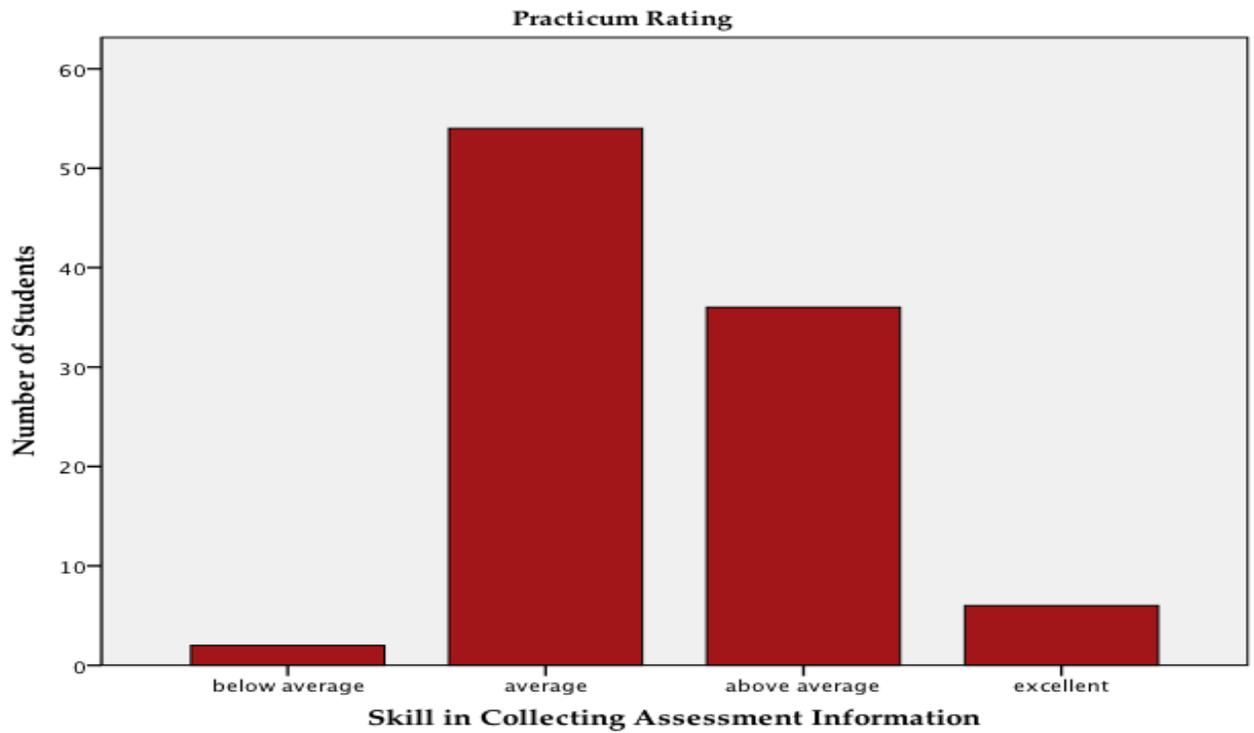
Ability to Formulate the Referral Question



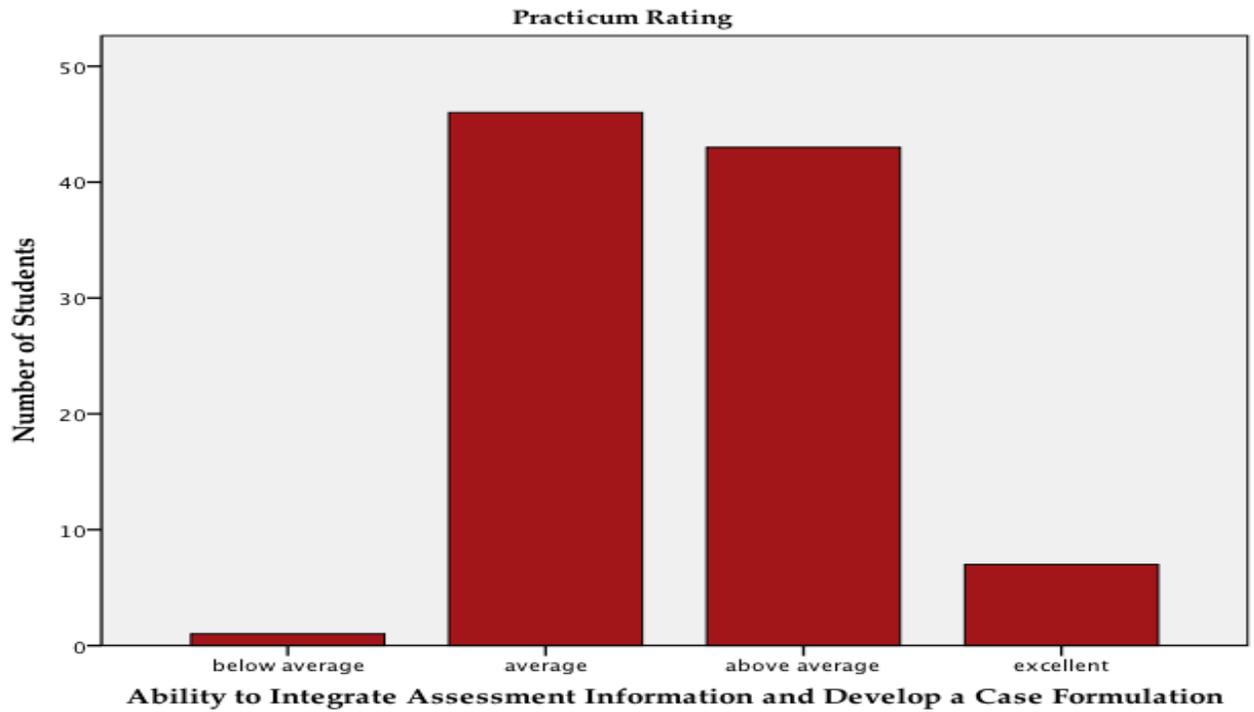
Skill in Selecting Assessment Methods or Techniques



Skill in Collecting Assessment Information



Ability to Integrate Assessment Information and Develop a Case Formulation



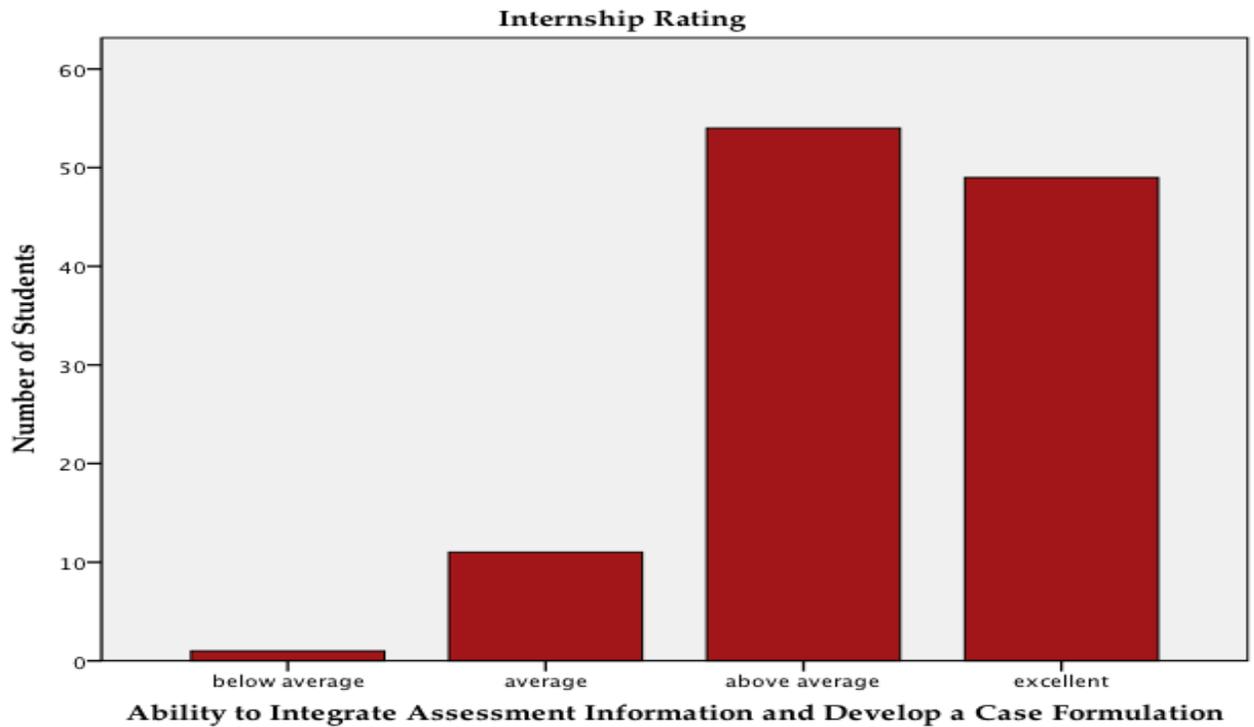


Table 4 presents the mean scores for the 4 measures of competence in assessment skills. A 5-point rating scale was used to rate students' performance, with 3 = "average," 4 = "above average," and 5 = "excellent."

Table 4
Mean Supervisor Ratings for Assessment Skills

Assessment Skill	Practicum	Internship
Ability to Formulate the Referral Question	3.52	4.23
Skill in Selecting Assessment Methods or Techniques	3.41	4.11
Skill in Collecting Assessment Information	3.47	4.23
Ability to Integrate Assessment Information and Develop a Case	3.58	4.31

Intervention Skills

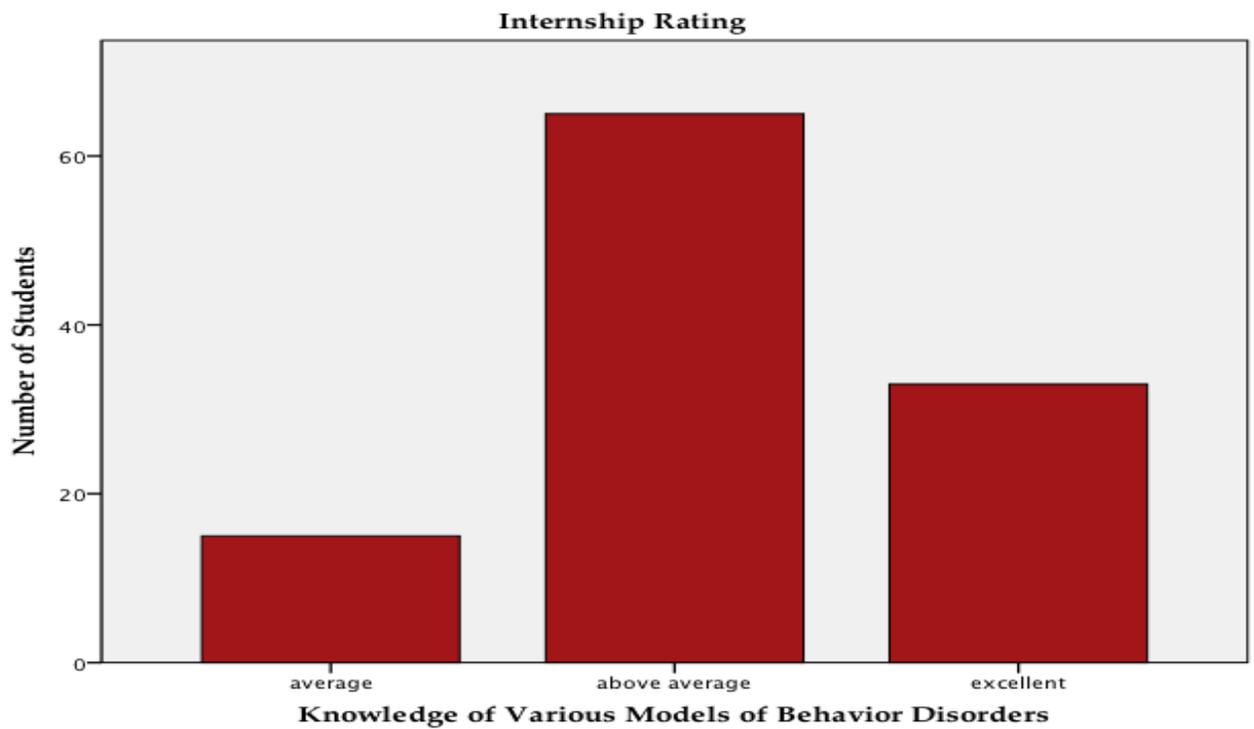
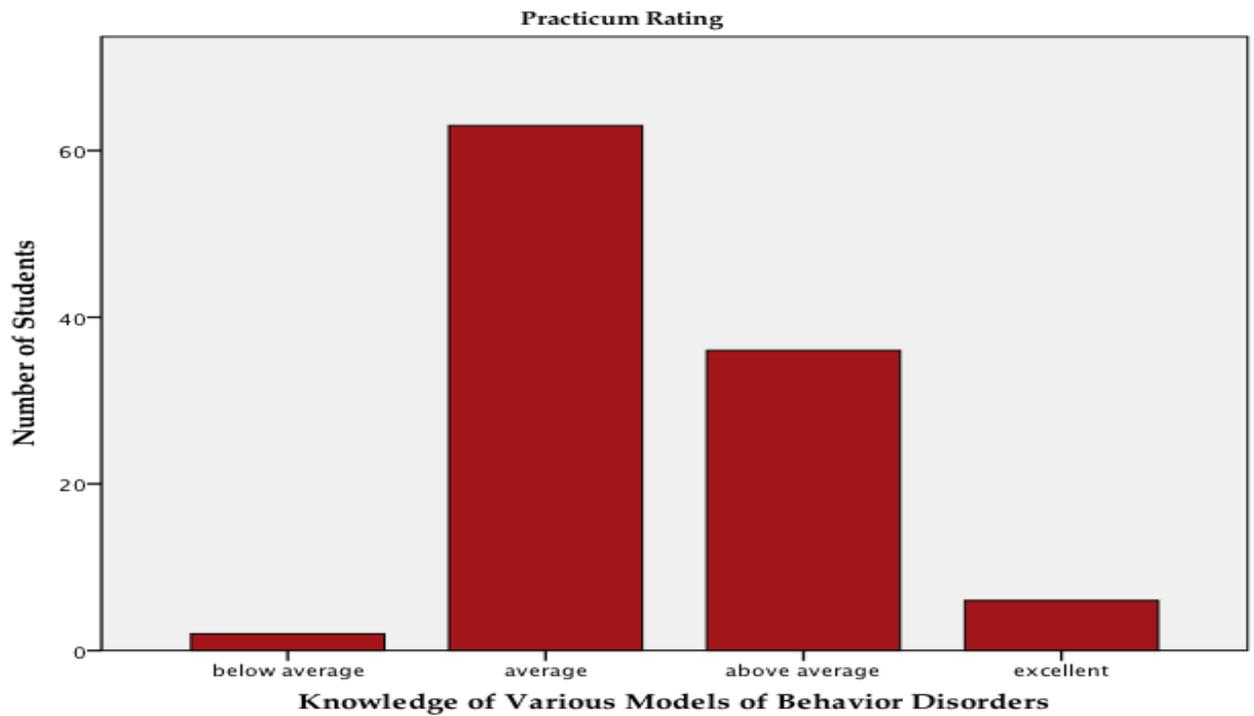
Five measures of competence in intervention skills were examined. The goal was that at least 80% of students achieve a rating of “average” or better for each competency at the end of the internship. Table 5 presents information for the percentage of students who demonstrated this level of mastery at the end of the practicum and the end of the internship.

Table 5

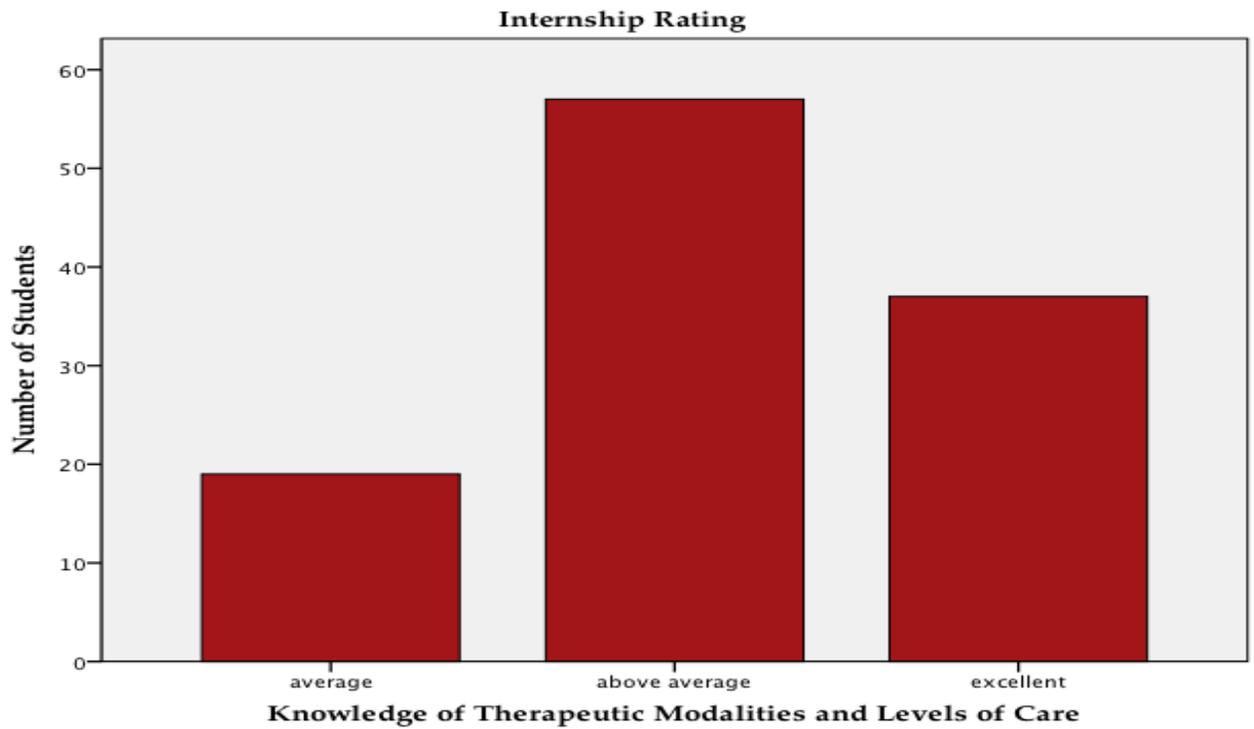
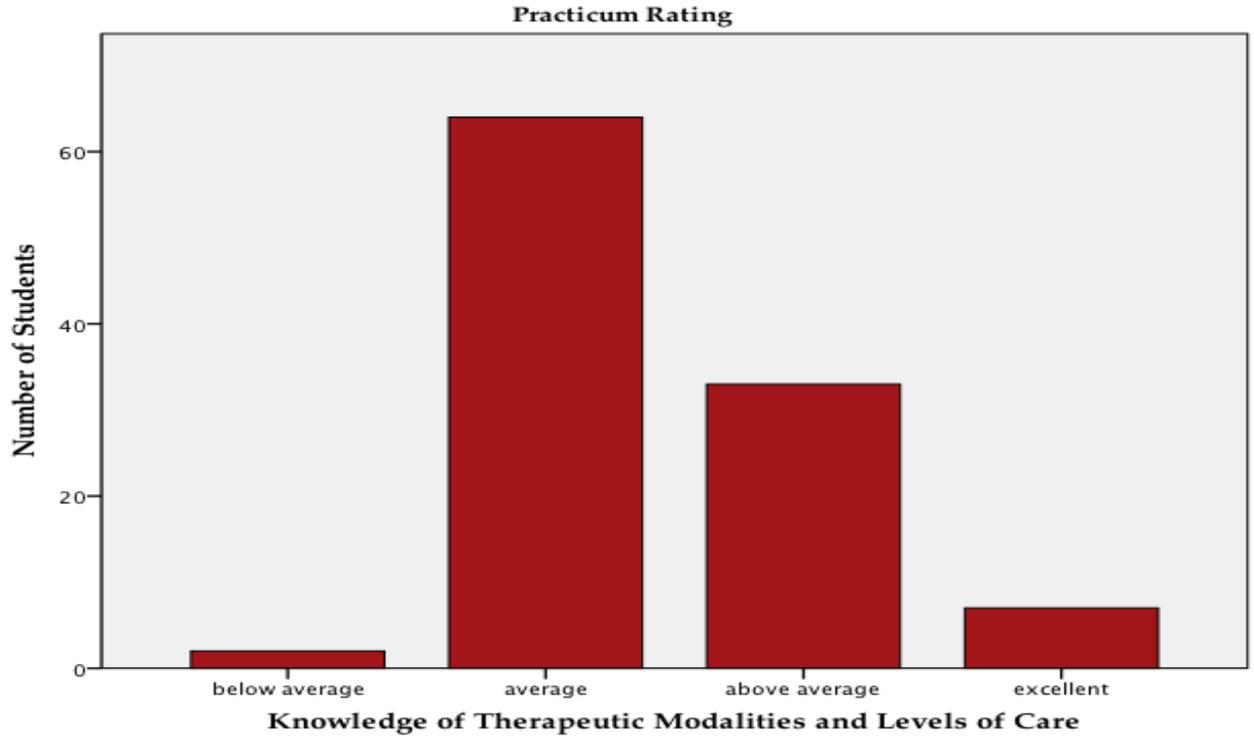
Intervention Skill	Practicum	Internship
Knowledge of Various Models of Behavior Disorders	98%	100%
Knowledge of Therapeutic Modalities and Levels of Care	98%	100%
Ability to Select Treatment Modality That is Appropriate for the Client	99%	100%
Skill in Applying Treatment Techniques or Plan	100%	100%
Ability to Evaluate the Efficacy of the Intervention	98%	100%

Histograms showing the number of students who were rated by clinical supervisors as demonstrating “average,” “above average,” or “excellent” levels of performance for each intervention skill are presented below.

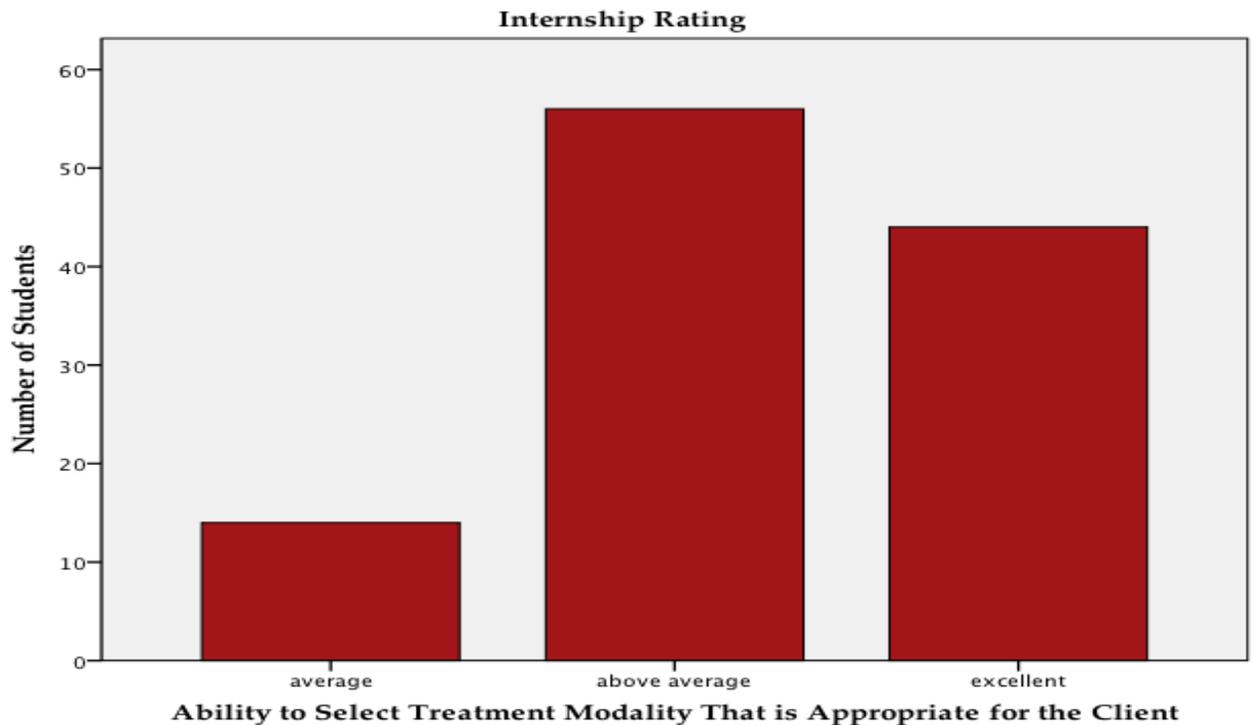
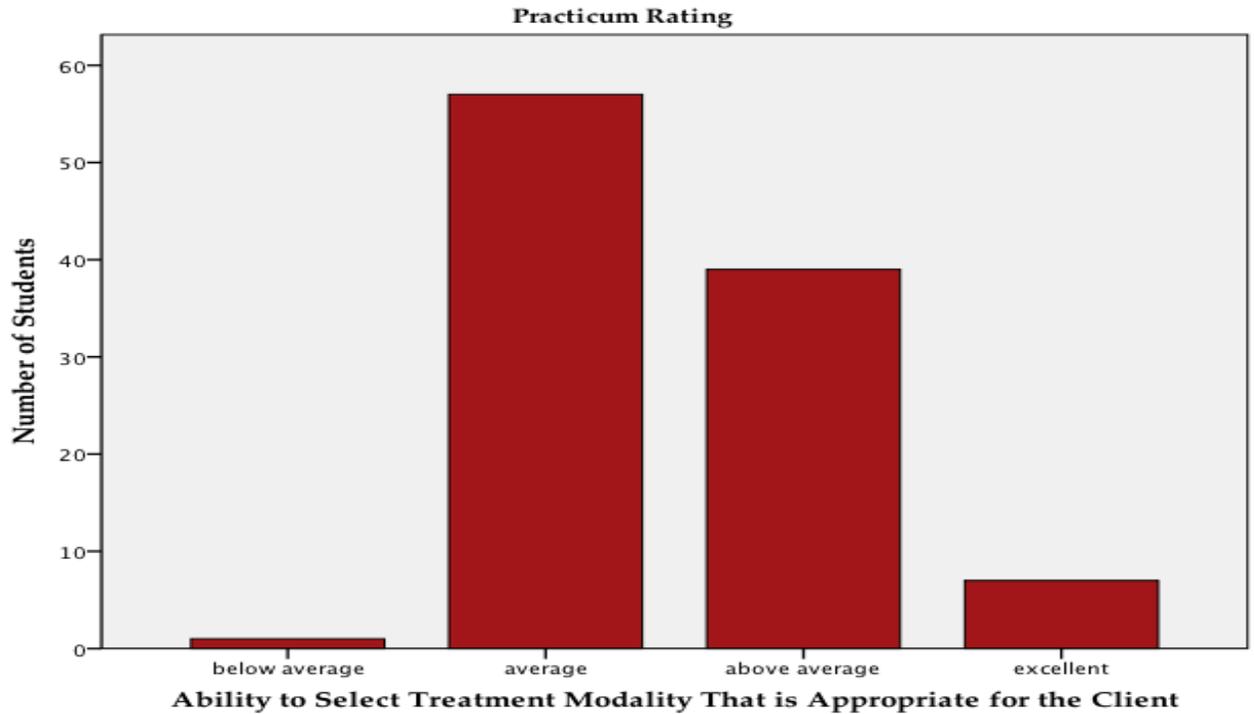
Knowledge of Various Models of Behavior Disorders



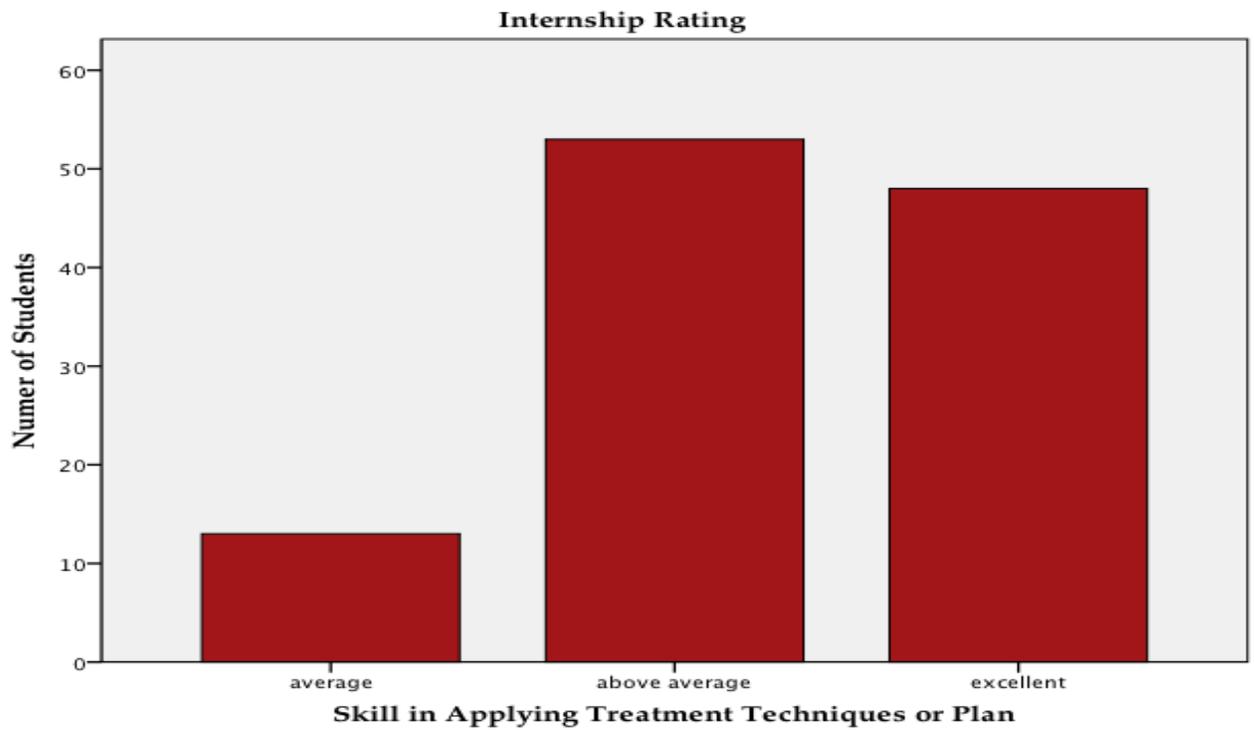
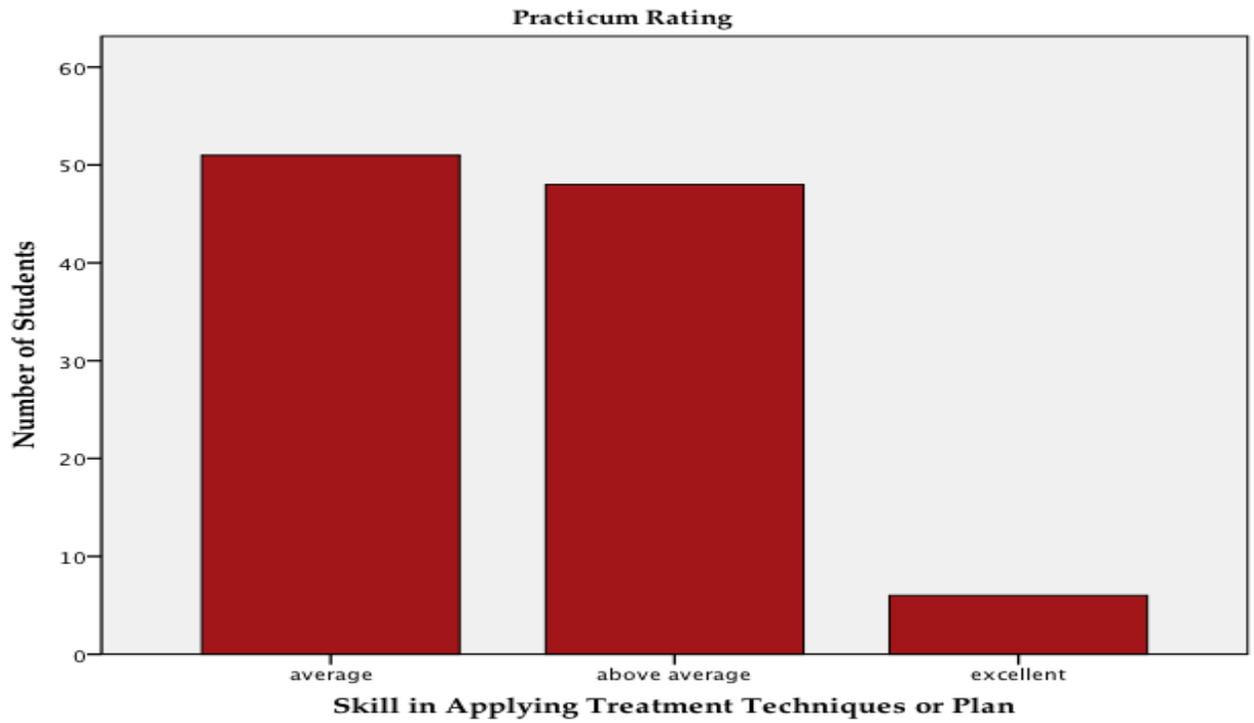
Knowledge of Therapeutic Modalities and Levels of Care



Ability to Select Treatment Modality That is Appropriate for the Client



Skill in Applying Treatment Techniques or Plan



Ability to Evaluate the Efficacy of the Intervention

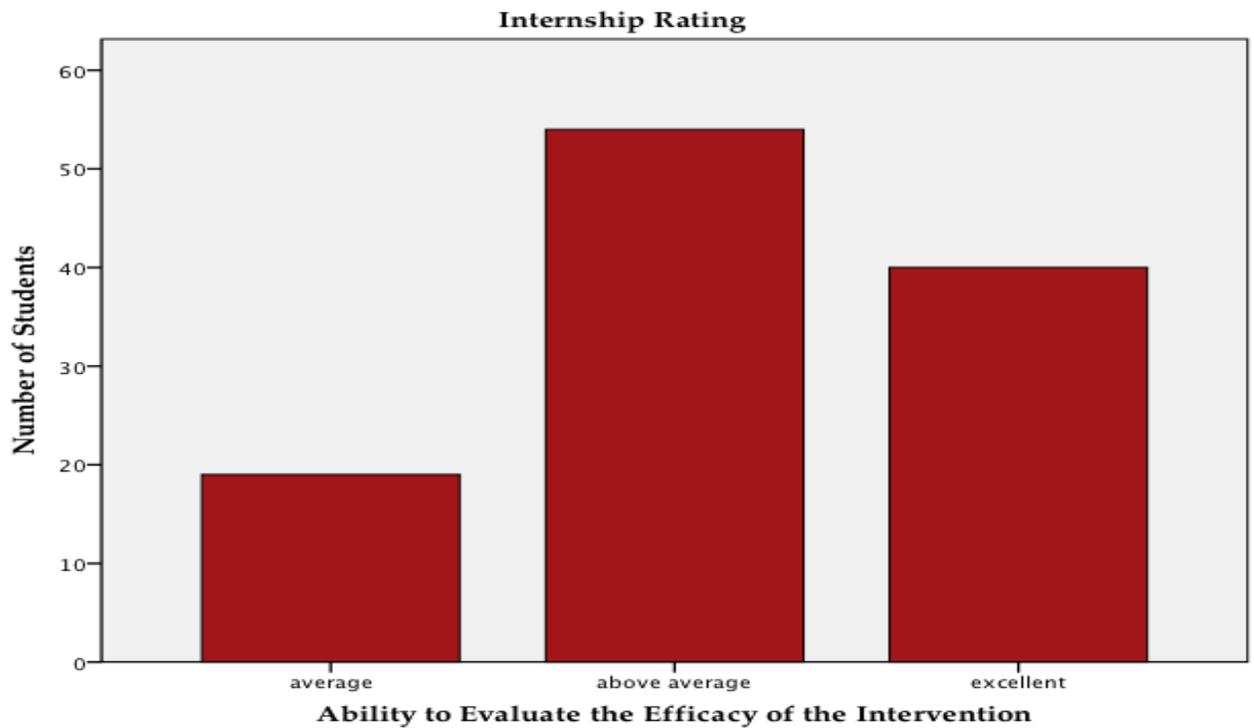


Table 6 presents the mean scores for the 5 measures of competence in intervention skills. A 5-point rating scale was used to rate students' performance, with 3 = "average," 4 = "above average," and 5 = "excellent."

Table 6
Mean Supervisor Ratings for Intervention Skills

Intervention Skill	Practicum	Internship
Knowledge of Various Models of Behavior Disorders	3.43	4.18
Knowledge of Therapeutic Modalities and Levels of Care	3.43	4.21
Ability to Select Treatment Modality That is Appropriate for the Client	3.50	4.29
Skill in Applying Treatment Techniques or Plan	3.56	4.35
Ability to Evaluate the Efficacy of the Intervention	3.54	4.22

Ethical and Professional Conduct

For **Ethical and professional conduct**, Counseling Psychology students are expected to demonstrate a) knowledge of the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association, b) the ability to identify potential ethical or professional problems, and c) to act in accordance with these ethical and professional standards.

All students must complete a required course titled "Ethical Principles for Counselors" which insures that students are knowledgeable about the ethical code for psychologists that has been promulgated by the American Psychological

Association and the American Counseling Association. Furthermore, the full-time faculty review the progress of all students in the program during the fall and spring semesters; this evaluation is used to identify instances of unprofessional or unethical behavior. Students who fail to meet the standards of professional or ethical behavior may be recommended for termination from the program.

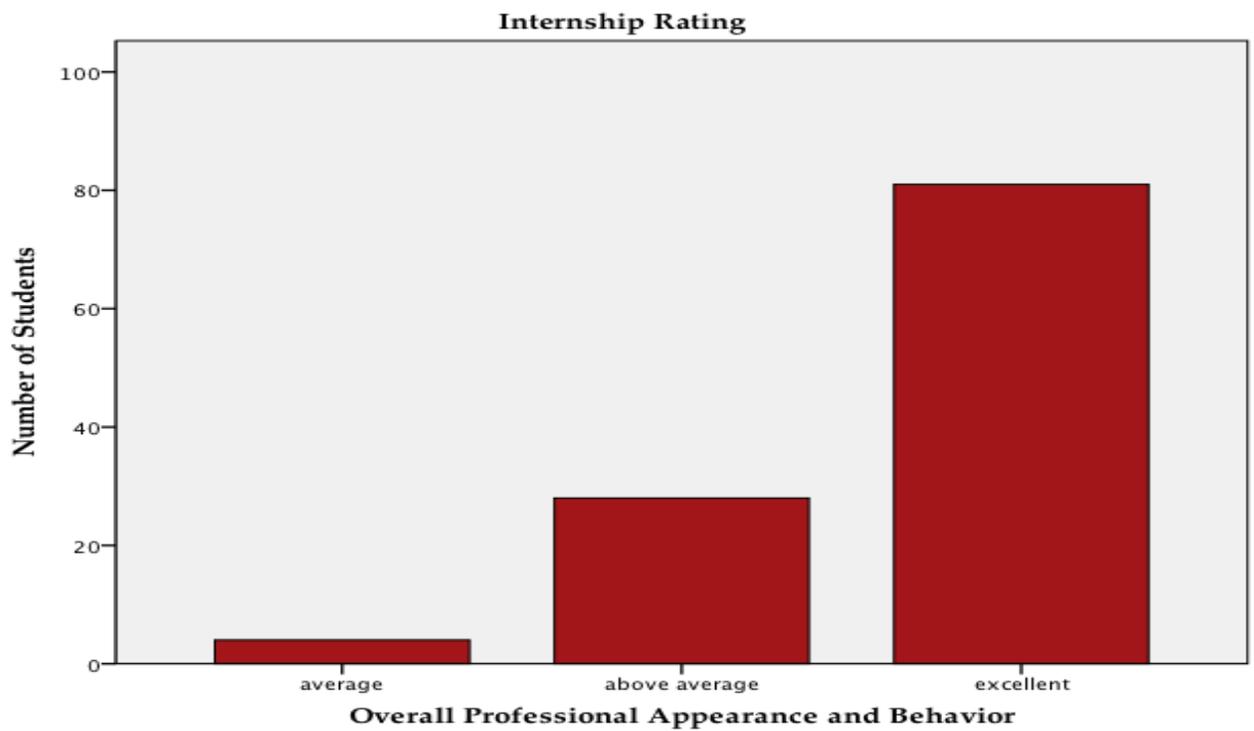
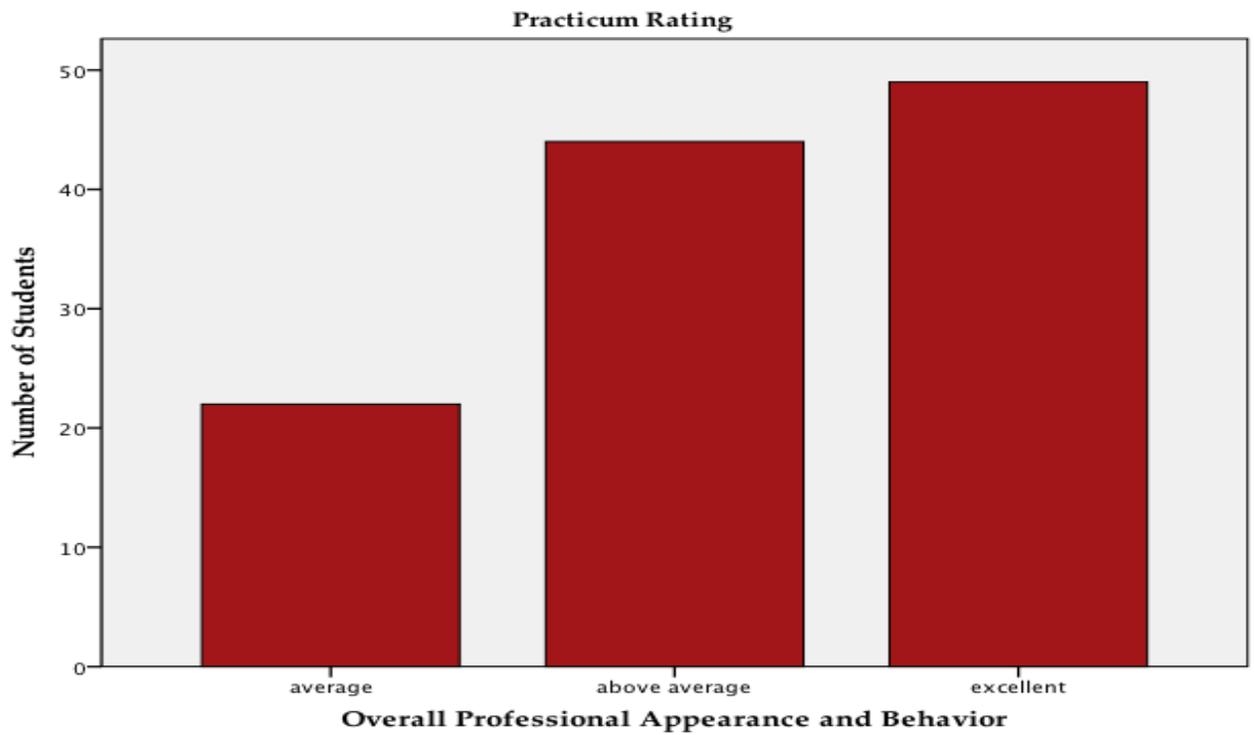
In addition to the evaluations described above, the practicum and internship supervisors evaluate each student on measures of ethical and professional conduct. These four measures were examined for this report. The goal was that at least 95% of students achieve a rating of “average” or better for each competency at the end of the internship. A very high goal was set for this domain because the Counseling Psychology Program faculty expect that students will always adhere to the ethical and professional standards of the profession. Table 7 presents information for the percentage of students who demonstrated this level of mastery at the end of the practicum and the end of the internship.

Table 7

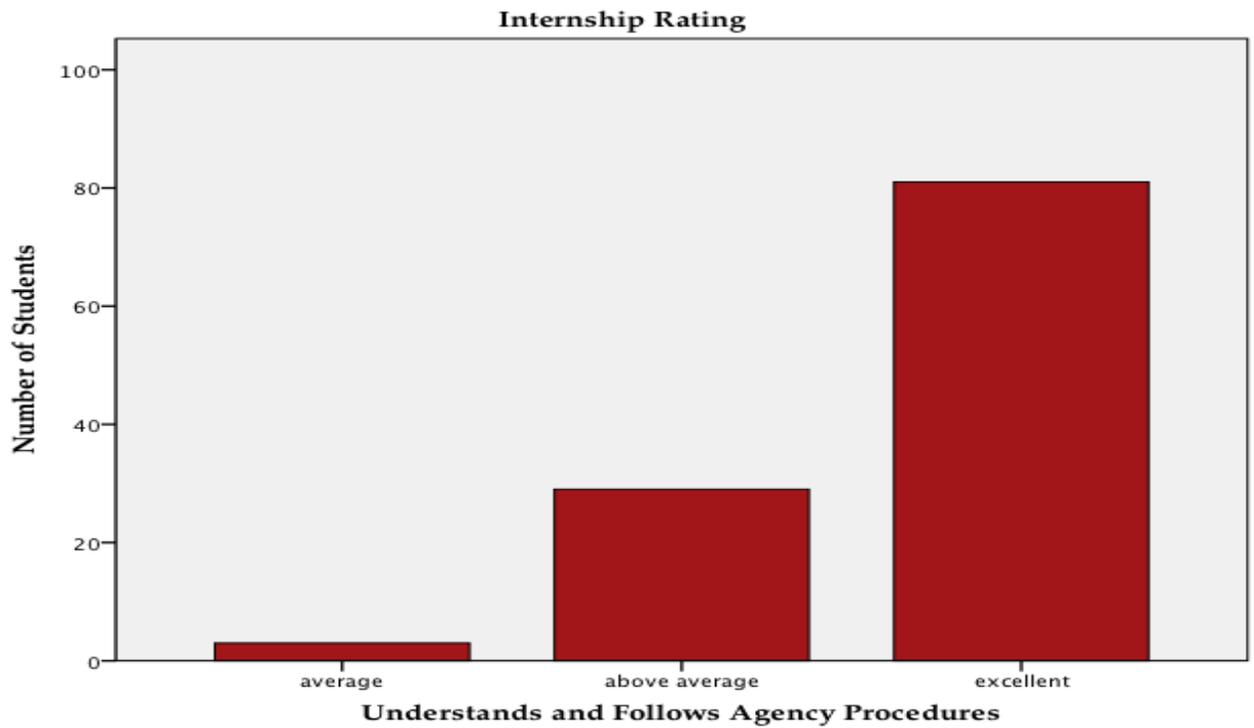
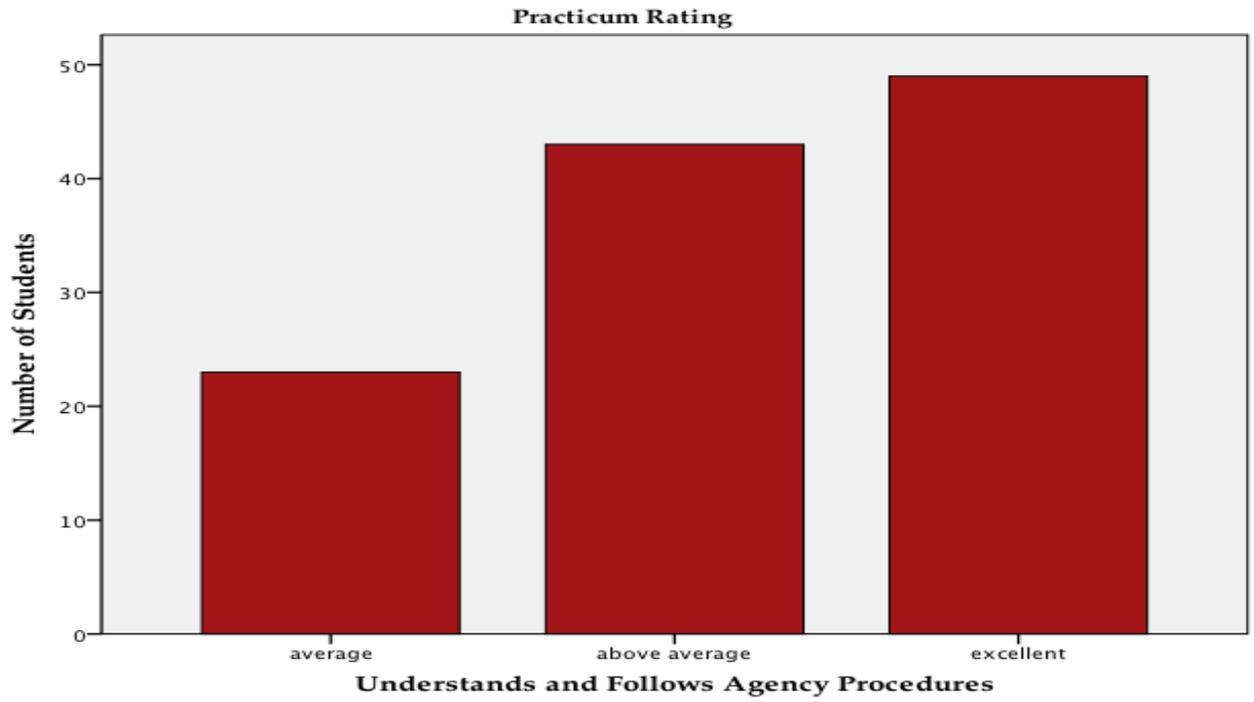
Ethical and Professional Conduct	Practicum	Internship
Overall Professional Appearance and Behavior	100%	100%
Understands and Follows Agency Procedures	100%	100%
Dependability in Fulfilling Agency Obligations	99%	100%
Ability to Use Good Judgment in Making Decisions	99%	100%

Histograms showing the number of students who were rated by clinical supervisors as demonstrating “average,” “above average,” or “excellent” levels of performance for each aspect of ethical and professional conduct are presented below.

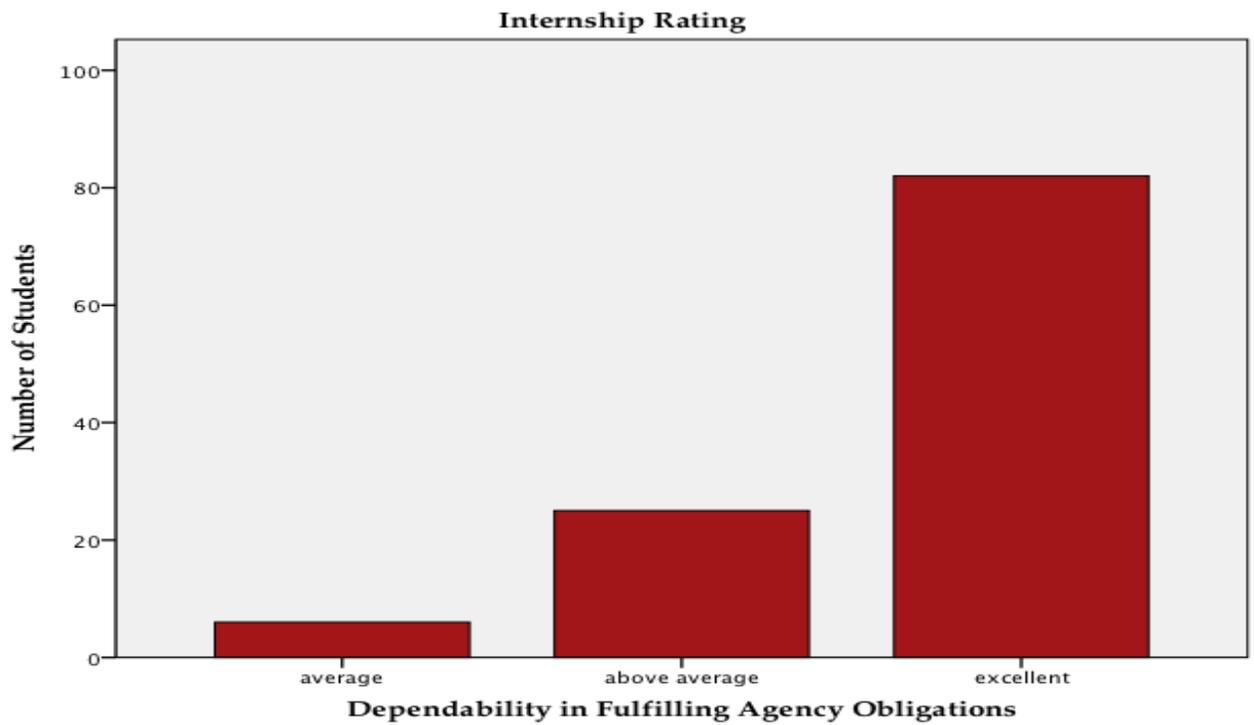
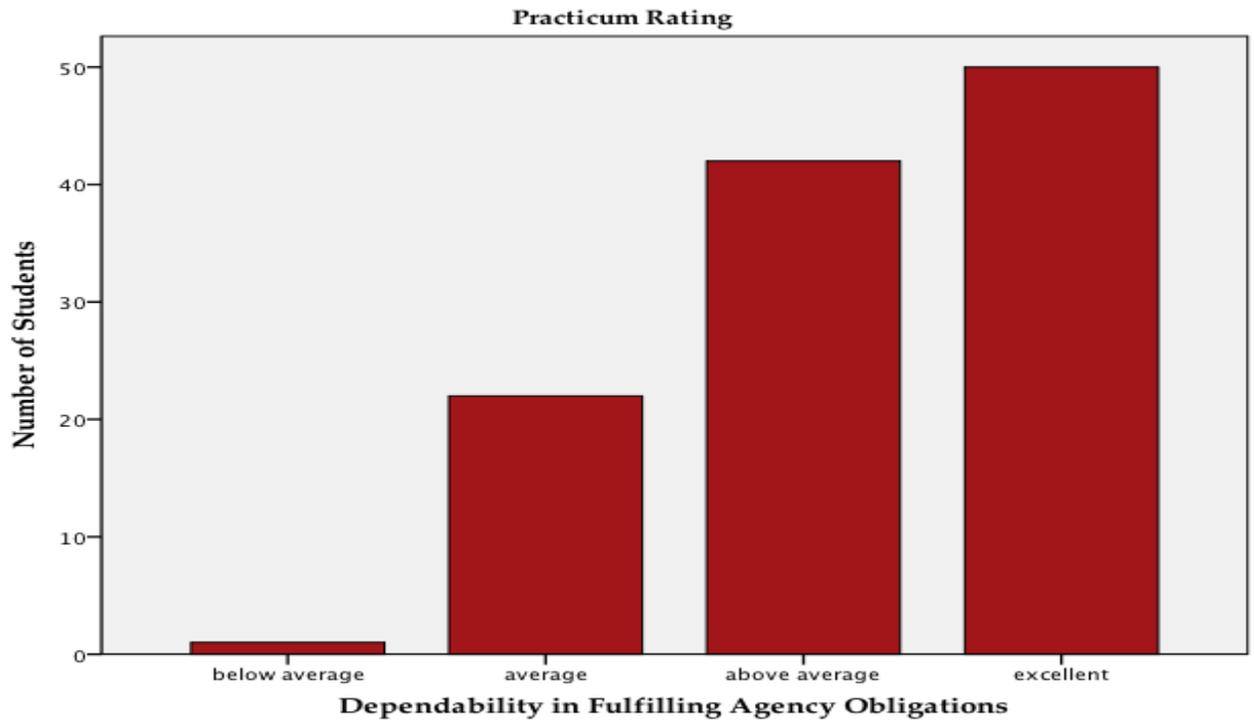
Overall Professional Appearance and Behavior



Understands and Follows Agency Procedures



Dependability in Fulfilling Agency Obligations



Ability to Use Good Judgment in Making Decisions

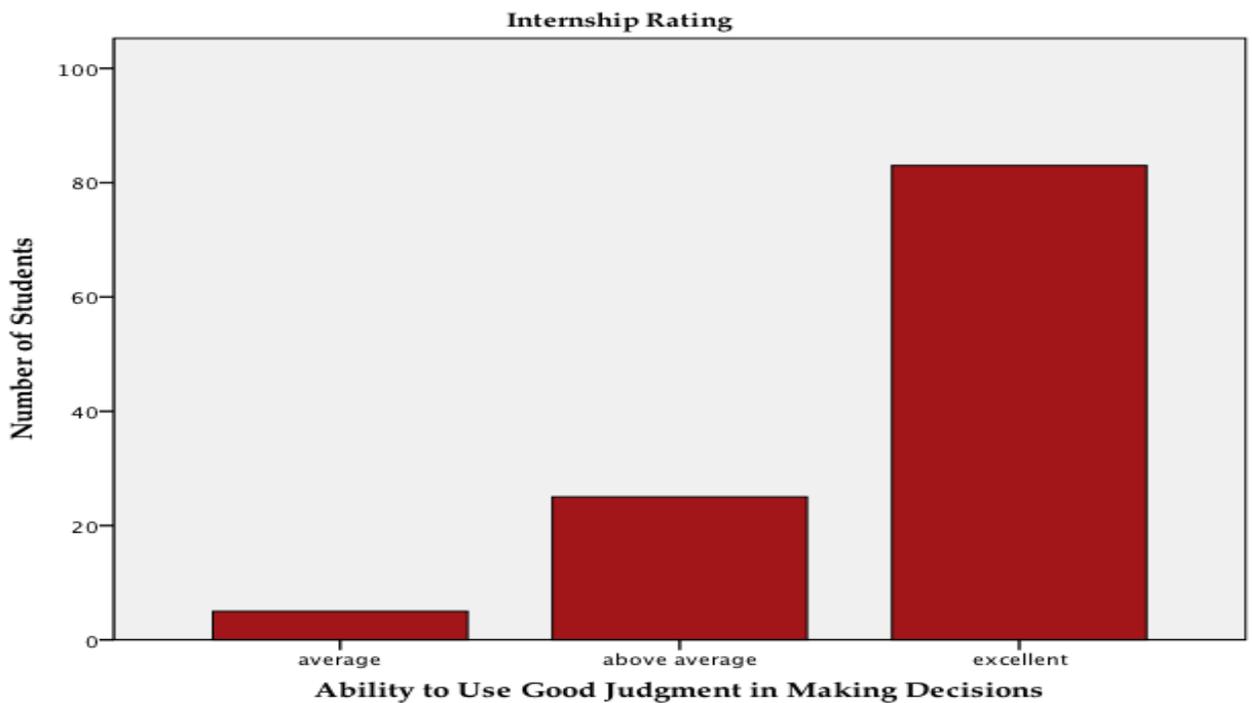
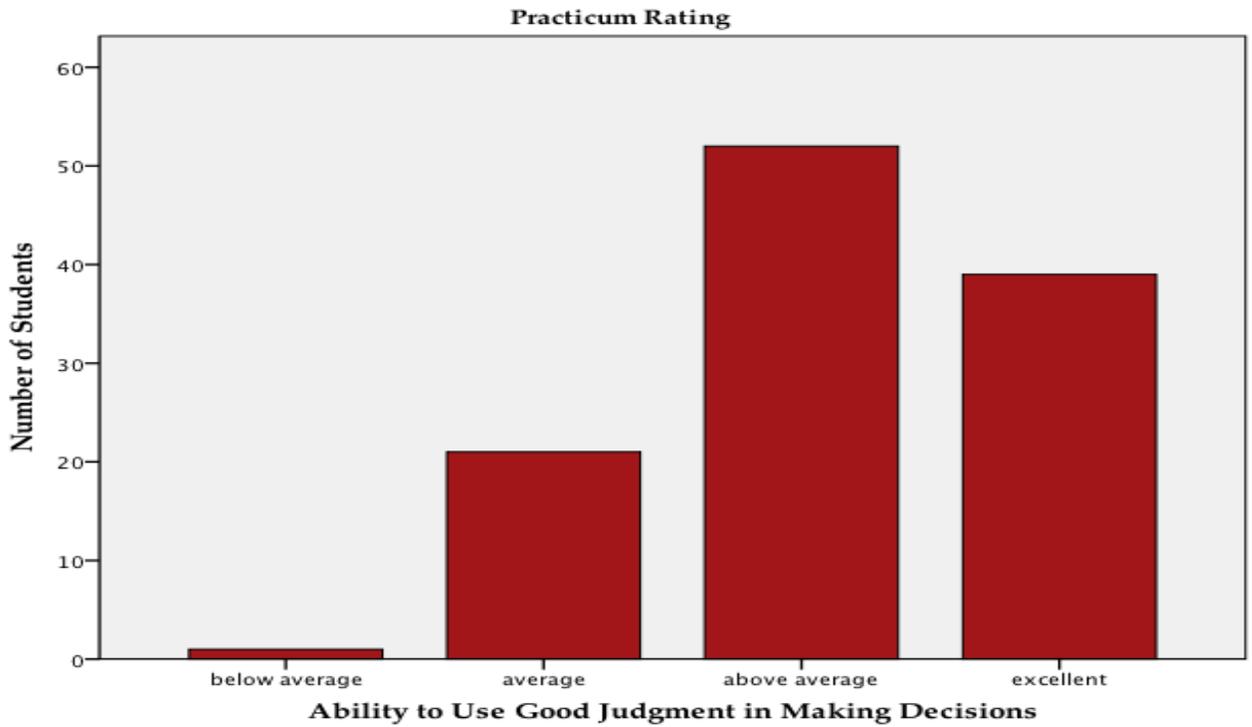


Table 8 presents the mean scores for the 4 measures of Ethical and Professional Conduct.

Table 8
Mean Supervisor Ratings for Ethical and Professional Conduct

Ethical and Professional Conduct	Practicum	Internship
Overall Professional Appearance and Behavior	4.24	4.69
Understands and Follows Agency Procedures	4.22	4.70
Dependability in Fulfilling Agency Obligations	4.23	4.68
Ability to Use Good Judgment in Making Decisions	4.15	4.70

Students' Improvement in Counseling Skills During the Practicum/Internship Experience

This evaluation also examined whether students demonstrated significant improvement in these counseling skills during the course of their practicum and internship training. Students' performance at the end of the practicum was compared to their performance at the end of the internship (roughly 9 months later). Repeated-measures ANOVAs were conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in the supervisors' practicum and internship ratings. Effect sizes were calculated to evaluate whether changes in students' performance were clinically significant. Partial eta² was the effect size statistic calculated for these analyses. Partial eta² can be interpreted as the percent of

variance accounted for by the variable or effect. Table 9 presents the results for these analyses.

Comparison of students' practicum and internship performance showed that students demonstrated statistically significant improvement in key counseling skills or competencies during the course of their practicum and internship training. More important, the effect size analyses indicate that improvement in students' counseling skills was clinically meaningful. Partial eta² values of .30 to .50 are considered to be moderate in magnitude, whereas partial eta² values of .20 to .30 are considered to be small effects. Students' demonstrated moderate improvement in the following learning outcomes: (1) competence in developing an interpersonal relationship with clients and clinical supervisors, (2) competence in clinical assessment, and (3) competence in implementing counseling interventions. Improvement in the domain of ethical and professional conduct in relationships with clients and agency colleagues was smaller (partial eta² values ranged from .22 to .30). It is important to note, however, that there was little room for improvement for these competencies because students received very high ratings in this domain for both the practicum and internship activities.

The finding that students demonstrated clinically meaningful improvement in interpersonal relationship, clinical assessment, and intervention skills is especially noteworthy because supervisors' ratings at the end of practicum are already quite high. At the end of practicum, agency supervisors rated the level of Counseling Psychology Program students' relationship skills, assessment skills, and intervention skills midway between "Average" and "Above Average." At the end of practicum, agency supervisors rated the level of Counseling Psychology Program students' ethical and professional conduct as "Above Average." At the completion of internship, agency supervisors rated the level of relationship skills and ethical and professional conduct midway between "Above Average" and "Excellent." Upon completion of internship, agency supervisors rated the level of assessment skills and intervention skills as somewhat higher than "Above Average."

Table 9
Analysis of Improvement in Students' Counseling Skills
from the End of Practicum to the End of Internship II
Course

Supervisor Rating	Mean Change	F-test	Partial Eta²
Ability to Communicate Empathy	0.66	(1, 111) = 54.76	.33
Ability to Engage the Client	0.72	(1, 113) = 64.70	.36
Ability to Set the Client at Ease	0.71	(1, 111) = 27.86	.35
Ability to Establish Rapport with the Client	0.75	(1, 113) = 74.50	.39
Ability to Communicate a Sense of Respect to the Client	0.64	(1, 108) = 55.78	.34
Ability to Formulate the Referral Question	0.71	(1, 92) = 62.31	.40
Skill in Selecting Assessment Methods or Techniques	0.70	(1, 94) = 67.19	.42
Skill in Collecting Assessment Information	0.76	(1, 95) = 78.14	.45
Ability to Integrate Assessment Information and Develop a Case Formulation	0.73	(1, 95) 70.32	.43
Knowledge of Various Models of Behavior Disorders	0.75	(1, 104) = 100.41	.49
Knowledge of Therapeutic Modalities and Levels of Care	0.79	(1, 102) = 96.54	.49

Ability to Select Treatment Modality That is Appropriate for the Client	0.79	(1, 101) = 87.00	.49
Skill in Applying Treatment Techniques or Plan	0.79	(1, 103) = 32.33	.46
Ability to Evaluate the Efficacy of the Intervention	0.68	(1, 95) = 22.00	.46
Overall Professional Appearance and Behavior	0.45	(1, 111) = 35.56	.24
Understands and Follows Agency Procedures	0.47	(1, 111) = 36.67	.25
Dependability in Fulfilling Agency Obligations	0.45	(1, 111) = 11.16	.22
Ability to Use Good Judgment in Making Decisions	0.55	(1, 109) = 47.39	.30

Comparison of 3 Cohorts of Students Who Completed Practicum/ Internship

The present report represents the third examination of student learning outcomes over a 10-year period. The following analyses compared the performance of these cohorts to determine whether there were significant changes in student performance during the past decade. The following analysis is informative because there have been significant changes in class size over the past decade, which could affect the quality of pre-practicum preparation for students enrolled in the Counseling Psychology Program.

One cohort (N = 126) included students who completed practicum/ internship during academic years 2002 – 2003 through 2006 – 2007. The second cohort (N = 113) included students who completed practicum/ internship during academic years 2007 – 2008 through 2009 – 2010. The third cohort (N = 116)

included students who completed practicum/internship during academic years 2010 - 2011 through 2012 - 2013.

One-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine whether there were significant differences among the groups for practicum and internship learning outcomes. Table 10 presents the results for practicum ratings. Table 11 presents the results for internship ratings.

Overall, results indicated that there were no significant changes in students' performance over the course of the past decade. For practicum ratings, there was one statistically significant difference among the groups for one learning outcome. For the item titled "Ability to Select Treatment Modality that is Appropriate for the Client," students in the most recent cohort were rated significantly higher than students in the earliest cohort. However, considering the large number of analyses conducted, it is important to interpret this finding cautiously. This finding could be spurious, reflecting a Type I error.

Table 10
Comparison of Practicum Ratings for 3 Cohorts

Supervisor Rating	F-test
Ability to Communicate Empathy	(2, 344) = 0.92
Ability to Engage the Client	(2, 344) = 0.83
Ability to Set the Client at Ease	(2, 344) = 0.36
Ability to Establish Rapport with the Client	(2, 345) = 0.51
Ability to Communicate a Sense of Respect to the Client	(2, 345) = 0.40
Ability to Formulate the Referral Question	(2, 290) = 0.44
Skill in Selecting Assessment Methods or Techniques	(2, 296) = 1.19
Skill in Collecting Assessment Information	(2, 304) = 0.20

Ability to Integrate Assessment Information and Develop a Case Formulation	(2, 306) = 2.26
Knowledge of Various Models of Behavior Disorders	(2, 316) = 0.39
Knowledge of Therapeutic Modalities and Levels of Care	(2, 325) = 1.26
Ability to Select Treatment Modality That is Appropriate for the Client	(2, 316) = 3.24, $p < .05$
Skill in Applying Treatment Techniques or Plan	(2, 315) = 1.09
Ability to Evaluate the Efficacy of the Intervention	(2, 298) = 0.78
Overall Professional Appearance and Behavior	(2, 349) = 1.58
Understands and Follows Agency Procedures	(2, 348) = 0.77
Dependability in Fulfilling Agency Obligations	(2, 348) = 1.14
Ability to Use Good Judgment in Making Decisions	(2, 346) = 1.52

Table 11
Comparison of Internship Ratings for 3 Cohorts

Supervisor Rating	F-test
Ability to Communicate Empathy	(2, 350) = 1.41
Ability to Engage the Client	(2, 350) = 1.69
Ability to Set the Client at Ease	(2, 350) = 1.80
Ability to Establish Rapport with the Client	(2, 349) = 1.12
Ability to Communicate a Sense of Respect to the Client	(2, 343) = 0.96
Ability to Formulate the Referral Question	(2, 345) = 0.11
Skill in Selecting Assessment Methods or Techniques	(2, 331) = 0.74
Skill in Collecting Assessment Information	(2, 340) = 0.68
Ability to Integrate Assessment Information and Develop a Case Formulation	(2, 348) = 0.28
Knowledge of Various Models of Behavior Disorders	(2, 343) = 0.03
Knowledge of Therapeutic Modalities and Levels of Care	(2, 346) = 0.03
Ability to Select	(2, 346) = 0.38

Treatment Modality That is Appropriate for the Client	
Skill in Applying Treatment Techniques or Plan	(2, 347) = 0.04
Ability to Evaluate the Efficacy of the Intervention	(2, 346) = 0.55
Overall Professional Appearance and Behavior	(2, 346) = 0.53
Understands and Follows Agency Procedures	(2, 346) = 2.42
Dependability in Fulfilling Agency Obligations	(2, 346) = 0.69
Ability to Use Good Judgment in Making Decisions	(2, 346) = 1.82

Conclusions and Future Directions

At this point in time, the core faculty conclude that there is no reason to make significant changes in the Counseling Psychology Program's curriculum. However, licensing regulations and standards of professional practice continue to evolve and the knowledge base regarding interventions that are empirically demonstrated to be effective continues to expand. The core faculty will continue to meet on a regular basis to monitor these developments and will revise the curriculum to reflect changes in the discipline. In particular, we will consider the possibility of developing new elective courses (advanced assessment or intervention courses).