Career Experiences of Counselor Educators: Early and Near-Tenure Experiences

Dana Heller Levitt and David A. Hermon

Counselor educators near the tenure years (5-10 years) experience challenges that differentiate them from their early and late career colleagues, regardless of tenure status. The following phenomenological study sought to ascertain the experiences of counselor education faculty during these distinct years of their academic careers. Eight counselor educators were interviewed and themes were derived, including a need for increased support pre- and post-tenure, adequate doctoral level preparation for faculty roles, and challenges in balancing the functions within and outside of the academy. Recommendations for current and emerging counselor educators are provided.

Finding A Fit: Career Experiences of Counselor Educators

A growing body of literature exists describing the experiences of faculty at the early stages of their careers (Conway, 2006; Magnuson, 2002; Magnuson, Norem, & Haberstroh, 2001; Magnuson, Shaw, Tubin, & Norem, 2004) and as they have been established as experts in the counselor education profession (Niles, Akos, & Cutler, 2001). Magnuson, Black, and Lahman (2006) engaged in a longitudinal study of new assistant professors of counselor education to study their changes in roles and experiences in the first three years of work. Their study tracks the developmental changes and insights as new faculty further engage in academia. The results of this research suggest the large role of experienced faculty as mentors in career success and satisfaction (Magnuson et al., 2006). Additionally, life demands of faculty, including first year experiences and understanding the tenure process (Conway), balance of wellness and job satisfaction (Connolly & Myers, 2003), cultural dynamics and career success (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004), occupational stress (Hill, 2009; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Reybold, 2005) and the acquisition of strategies that lead to success (Niles et al.) are foci of research attention. Yet there appears to be minimal discussion of the experiences of faculty when they are 5 to 10 years into their careers. In other words, what happens between entering and beginning to solidify oneself in the profession? Issues of interest include earning tenure, moving up in rank, making decisions regarding "fit" with current position, and exploring options of staying and pursuing other opportunities.

The purpose of the present study was to highlight, through phenomenological inquiry, the experiences of counselor educators in the "near tenure" (e.g., 5 to 10 years) years. Eight counselor educators were interviewed to ascertain their experiences and answer the central question: What are the experiences of counselor educators during these important years?

Early- to Mid-Career Faculty Experiences

There is a limited body of research on counselor education faculty careers in the specified time frame of the present study. A small body of literature regarding mid-career faculty is extracted from other fields of study as a context for the present inquiry. Mid-career faculty are defined as "scholars who have tenure and yet perceive themselves as still relatively distant from retirement" (Baker-Fletcher, Carr, Menn, & Ramsay, 2005, p. 4). Romano, Hoesing, O"Donovan, and Weinsheimer (2004) provide an even broader definition of faculty "no longer at the early stages of their careers" (p. 22). Given the relatively long time to retirement (25 years or more), job satisfaction may shift from the achieved extrinsic "status" markers (e.g., tenure and promotion to professor) to more intrinsic markers (e.g., knowing work matters, mentoring the next generation of counselor educators). Faculty may be similar to the employees in Connolly and Myers" (2003) study, who found wellness and mattering to be significant predictors of job satisfaction.

Faculty Challenges: The Tenure Process

Tenure may be perceived as creating an opportunity for life balance and for the faculty member to expand teaching and service activities. Pre-tenured faculty may experience greater occupational stress than their tenured counterparts (Hill, 2009). In reality, tenured faculty have increased expectations. Tenured faculty are expected to have demonstrated a strong work ethic and to provide a mature perspective to students and early career faculty (Baker-Fletcher et al., 2005). The demands for mentorship and expert status increase with greater success. Faculty are placed in the role of experts and leaders, providing direction to the profession and to academe. One is left to wonder when this transformation from junior to senior faculty takes place. Does the faculty member, only a few years post-tenure, truly have the means to provide the type of mentorship expected to new faculty? Are there faculty members who achieve the status and expectations for success prior to the tenure marker?

Mid-career faculty also express frustration with the limited opportunities for pedagogical development (Baker-Fletcher et al., 2005). Most workshops for curricular design and enhancement are geared toward doctoral teaching assistants and early career faculty (Baker-Fletcher et al., Romano et al., 2004). These sessions do not offer the resources required of faculty who have been teaching for several years and whose material suddenly seems dated as technology and academic discipline continue to advance (Sorcinelli, 1999). Particularly in counselor preparation, rapid sociocultural changes require faculty to remain up to date on issues and the means by which emerging counselors can be encouraged to facilitate change. Students change, the discipline changes, and faculty members may find that once-effective teaching methods no longer have the same impact on students (Romano et al.). The elimination of tenure pressure creates a unique opportunity for faculty to grow as teachers, yet attention to pedagogy may have been lacking to this point. The pressures experienced early in one"s career to publish may have distracted efforts to invest in growth as a teacher (Baker-Fletcher et al.). Additionally, increased administrative responsibilities may take time away from the newly tenured faculty from exploring and mastering innovative pedagogical practices.

Unique Challenges for Counselor Educators Between their 5th and 10th Year

The bulk of research regarding faculty experiences is generalized across academic disciplines. Limited research exists regarding the experiences of counselor educators during these defining years. One might assume, based upon previous research, that counselor education faculty experience similar challenges of faculty from other disciplines. There are circumstances unique to counselor education faculty such as the continual changes in the counseling profession, advances in counseling service provision, and the demands and orientation of a service-driven profession. Distance from professional counseling practice may be an additional concern. As counselor educators prepare students to enter the profession, they may themselves be anywhere from 5 to 10 years removed from clinical practice. Such distance has the capacity to create dissonance in preparation and content expertise as well as a research agenda that adequately reflects the state of the profession.

Phenomenological inquiry was used to explore the experiences of counselor education faculty near tenure. Rather than use quantitative analyses to test for differences, or qualitative grounded theory to derive a theory, the researchers judiciously chose the method offering the greatest likelihood for faculty to share their experiences in their words to attempt to capture themes during crucial years immediately pre and post-tenure. The authors selected the 5 to 10 year range to be consistent with the literature regarding faculty neither in early career experiences nor nearing retirement.

Method

Phenomenology

Phenomenological research is research, "from the point of view of the behaving organism itself" (Snygg, 1935, p. 406). It is both a philosophical approach and a way of gathering information (Lemon & Taylor, 1998). The goal of the researcher is to obtain an articulate description of the individual"s experiences with the phenomena and his or her understanding of self in those experiences (Anderson-Nathe, 2008). The process of phenomenological inquiry begins with reduction. The researcher must work to suspend all previous knowledge of a phenomenon in order to approach it as unique to the time, place, context and the observer"s subjective perspective. Next, decisions must be made about what data will be gathered and from whom. The researcher uses qualitative methods to obtain information from participants as they subjectively describe the phenomenon (Lemon & Taylor). This information is gathered and analyzed with the researcher again attempting to suspend previous knowledge and biases while working to "live the experience as if it were her own" (Lemon & Taylor, p.233).

Sampling

The authors employed two sampling procedures. The first method was through CESNET, a voluntary listserv for counselor educators and graduate students in counselor education. A message was sent to the list requesting individuals with 5 to 10 years of counselor education experience to participate. Intentional sampling was also employed wherein the researchers solicited participation from faculty who they knew and who met the criteria. Some of these individuals were recommended through snowball sampling as well as direct contact by the researchers. The researchers were mindful of the challenges of interviewing individuals they knew. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to ensure consistency in the interview questions. Additionally, the researchers consulted one another before or after interviews with colleagues to address issues with objectivity and potential for bias. Individuals agreeing to participate were sent a brief demographic questionnaire and an informed consent form for participation in the study. Following receipt of a signed consent agreement, the

participants were contacted to schedule individual telephone interviews.

Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted with two counselor educators. Each of the researchers interviewed one of the pilot study participants by telephone using the pre-determined interview questions. The participants of the pilot reported that they found the questions easy to understand and offered few suggested changes. One additional question was added as a result and at the recommendation of one of the pilot interviews. This question asked participants to consider the factors that shape their roles as counselor educators, to include elements that draw upon participants" life balance and faculty role expectations.

Participants

Eight counselor education faculty members were interviewed for the study. Five of the participants were male and three were female. The mean age of participants was 42.4 (range = 36-48). Participants were primarily Caucasian (n = 7). One participant identified as African American. The mean number of years as a counselor educator was 7.5 (range = 5-10 years). The mean years of professional counseling experience prior to or during faculty work was 7.5 (range = 0-16 years). Most of the participants were pre-tenure. At the time of the study, five were planning to submit materials for promotion and tenure within the next two years, and 2 had achieved tenure within the previous year. One participant was previously tenured at another institution. All of the participants were employed as counselor educators at the time of interview. Five participants were at their second institution, two at their third institution, and one at a fourth institution. Mean time spent in the current position at the time of interview was 3.1 years (range = 0.5-6).

Procedures

Consistent with qualitative sampling procedures, interviews were conducted until a saturation point was reached (Patton, 1990). That is, the point at which participants" experiences were repetitive and did not offer additional insights into the phenomenon of faculty at this career stage.

Each of the eight participants spoke with one of the two researchers by telephone for the individual interviews. The interviews were recorded, with the participants" consent, and transcribed for analysis. The interview protocol was designed to meet the purpose of the phenomenological study to ascertain the experiences of counselor education faculty at this point of their academic careers.

The specific interview questions asked participants to compare their current teaching, research, and scholarship expectations with what they initially expected. Participants who had been at more than one institution were asked to discuss these expectations for each position they held. Participants were also asked to share their greatest surprise (i.e., significant disparities between expectations and discovered reality) in their counselor education careers; the significant contributors to levels of work satisfaction and dissatisfaction; and what they would have liked to have known prior to entering academe. Participants similarly were asked to discuss the confluence of relationships between personal issues (e.g., age, career interests, and personal goals) and professional issues (e.g., teaching, research, service). Finally, the interview concluded with the question, "If you had to do it over again, would you pursue being a faculty member?"

Each interview was approximately 1 hour in duration. A graduate assistant transcribed the recordings. Individual member checks were conducted with the participants by offering them the opportunity to review the transcriptions for accuracy and to add or delete content. A final member check procedure entailed follow-up

questions with participants for elaboration of content.

Researcher Bias

As counselor educators in our fifth to tenth years of experience, we were aware of the potential for researcher bias in the present study. The authors entered the research with this awareness and conducted numerous checks to ensure our objectivity. The authors acknowledge the similarities of participants" reported experiences and their own career positions. Suspension of judgment, knowledge, and shared experiences with the participants was an expected challenge upon commencement of the study. As such, the research team was deliberate and consistent in sharing our experiences and perceptions with one another throughout the interview process. Researcher bias was accounted for in the interviews and analysis through a semi-structured protocol, member checks, and consultation between the researchers. Attempts to control bias were prominent in strong collaboration throughout the project. While attempts were made, the researchers acknowledge that this research, as with most qualitative designs (Patton, 1990) may bear the effects of personal experiences and perspectives.

Data Analysis

The final transcripts were reviewed by the researchers and a third, independent reviewer trained in qualitative research. The purpose of the triangulated review and the member checks was to extract themes of the interviews more objectively and validly, given the researchers" close connection to the study and interview process (Creswell, 2008).

Open and axial coding systems were applied to categorize the data in the transcripts (Neuman, 2006). The transcripts were independently reviewed with notations about prospective themes during open coding (Patton, 2002). The researchers then came together with the initial coding to

further explore the themes. An axial system was employed to further categorize the themes derived from the interviews (Patton, 2002). Continued verification of the accuracy of the placement of data in the themes was conducted throughout the analysis (Patton, 2002).

Results

The initial themes were identified by the researchers" and reviewer"s independent study of the transcripts (Patton, 2002). Open coding produced initial themes centered around satisfaction and dissatisfaction related to careers in academia. Further review of the themes and transcripts in the axial coding phase yielded more specific categories, including work role balance, work-life balance, and doctoral level preparation.

The final analysis of the 8 interviews, through selective coding (Neuman, 2006), yielded 3 categories of experiences for the counselor education faculty: support pre- and post-tenure, doctoral level preparation, and balance. Two additional areas, what counselors educators would have liked to know and whether they would pursue this career path again, provided rich data for counselor education programs and are discussed in the recommendations section.

Category 1: Support

Support was characterized by participants" needs for assistance during the transition to faculty roles and within their work lives. Participants discussed the support they receive in their institutions and by nature of academia.

> "**One of the reasons I don't work in K-12 anymore is because they are heavy on policies and rules and not a lot of trust in the field … that has always been a strong aspect of higher education, the academic freedom, the creativity to design what you want in a course.**"

"I am right where I need to be. I am at a place where they give me so much autonomy … the days are mine and I can do what I need to do."

Much of the support addressed by participants reflected their experiences as pre-tenure faculty. One participant reflected on the transition from a personal and professional context and the challenge of testing assumptions regarding pedagogy.

"…the education portion of the counselor education is really important to me…I have really high personal standards when it comes to teaching. It felt like you were constantly busy being an educator."

Support was further discussed with respect to the requirements of the job. Time seemed to emerge in several participants" comments. One participant commented on the time related to the quality of work to be produced. Another participant mentioned the help received through graduate assistants.

"…it is different preparing a manuscript for publication than…getting a paper to turn in at the end of the semester. The quality level has to be quite higher than what you have done previously…so that has added a lot of time to each week."
"I get a student [assistant] but I only get her for 4 hours a week and I need a lot more time than that to do various things…so sometimes I am up to 2:00 in the morning."

It should be noted that sometimes participants did not feel supported in their work. These comments primarily reflected collegial relationships in which support was anticipated. Participants were surprised by the lack of support. There was a general sense of respect for peers and their work, but tremendous dissatisfaction with interpersonal conflicts and an overriding sense of competition, particularly among a group of counselors. For example,

"I thought, oh if I get in with the counseling people they are going to be more sensitive, more caring of people, there will be less squabbles … colleagues who start rumors about you, spread lies, come into your class and sit in the back of the classroom so they can gain material about people's teaching… ego and competition is what I really didn't expect."
"I think you waste too much energy on trying to understand and avoid the dynamics of those things between faculty … some expect the level of difference as if we live in a caste society in the 1800s."
"I did not expect the kind of junior high bullying thing that goes on to step in the way of expectations."

Another participant spoke of the importance of colleagues and mentors in understanding the role, function, and expectations of faculty with respect to promotion and tenure. This comment seems salient given the perspectives previously discussed regarding collegial support and the general navigation of the promotion and tenure process.

"I have a clear and consistent message from other people that I talk to, but not a clear and consistent message from the director of our school or the people that are involved in reviewing my dossier and giving me feedback on my annual review."

It was clear that participants sought support in their professional relationships. This included colleagues from one"s own institution, as well as the broader community of counselor educators. The participants indicated that it is this sense of connection that contributes to their inspiration and overall satisfaction with their faculty roles.

"the ability to travel, the ability to be in a community when I go to a conference and it's like there are people all over the United States who

**are doing similar jobs as I am …
there's a community … you go to the
next conference and you see them
and again … the community, the
travel, those have been the really
pleasant surprises"**
**"I would say the relationships I have
with my colleagues are the greatest
satisfaction [sic] relationship I have. I
put that above financial gain; that is
the central piece of my work
satisfaction."**

In addition to university colleagues and
counselor educators nationwide, students
provided a grounding force to remind the
participants why they entered the profession
and enhanced career satisfaction.

**"I enjoy the students probably the
most…satisfies me professionally,
but personally I enjoy them, their
personality with the same respect to
my colleagues they play an important
factor in the enjoyment of the job."**
**"For the most part…the students are
really good, both at the master's level
and the doctoral level…two masters
students did presentations with me…
to go and stand in front of a bunch of
people when you are a master's
student to make presentations. … we
have a good number of those
students that get involved and do
really good work."**

Category 2: Doctoral Level Preparation

Doctoral level preparation emerged as a
distinct category from support. Participants
discussed the surprises they experienced
upon entering their first faculty positions.

**"I didn't realize the time it was going
to take and then on top of that my
chair was of the mindset that you had
to be in the office five days a week
from 9 to 5…though we had faculty
meetings at 9:00 in the
morning…working until 8:00 or 9:00
at night and then coming back the
next morning, that was hard to
balance."**

Often, these surprises seemed to be rooted
in their own doctoral level preparation.
They observed their own mentors
and faculty and combined their observations
with the means by which they navigated
their own doctoral study. As one participant
stated,

**"…where I went to school that was
normal because you couldn't go into
a class and not be prepared to be
there. And if you had to be up to 2:00
they weren't going to cry you a river
because you stayed up late."**

There were surprises and challenges to
their work mentioned by participants. These
participants felt that they were unprepared
for the realities of academia because the
issues were not addressed in their doctoral
preparation. Issues around equity, earning
additional income, and general work
environment presented unexpected
challenges to participants.

**"I had one raise in three years at my
other university ... Not only are you
not going to get a raise but every
year there is going to be somebody
who comes in making more than
you… that is the way higher ed works
compared to other settings."**
**"… counselor educators making
money outside of the institution
drove me nuts. They would be
working almost full time outside the
university and carrying whatever the
minimum load was and they would
teach somewhere else or they would
be working in private practice and it
would eat up 20 or 25 hours a week."**
**"I wanted to believe that everything
here is about honoring students,
about learning, and that there would
be excitement to that climate and a
sense of collegiality and teamwork.
But that is not the case here or at my
other university."**

Category 3: Balance

A significant yet not surprising theme that
emerged was a sense of balance, or lack
thereof, for faculty. Two themes within the

balance category emerged: faculty roles and responsibilities, and career-life balance.

Faculty roles and responsibilities. Participants discussed the journey, challenges, and successes in navigating a balance in work functions. They consistently expressed that the balance is unique to academia and their move to counselor education faculty roles.

> **"…there is not enough hours in the week and that is basically a three-pronged job, and you know one in and of itself could be a full-time job…so managing what I would consider to be three part-time jobs all into one."**

> **"…when one role dominates, whether service dominates or research seems to dominate or the teaching dominates; I would like to have some type of balance between those things"**

One participant expressed surprise over the amount of time involved in course preparation:

> **"I taught as an adjunct in one course and I thought that was time consuming and at the time I wasn't aware of how time consuming it would be to teach three. It is more than just triple the amount of time."**

Time to devote towards research and publication in particular was mentioned by several participants. The balance of research, teaching, and scholarship responsibilities was a significant theme in much of the participants" discussions of research in particular.

> **"X was a teaching institution and they had a 70-15-15 split on the three areas [teaching, scholarship, and service] and that was spelled out in the faculty handbook. I had to do one expectation to keep my position and another to meet my personal expectation. Coming to Y, it is not spelled out in the handbook, but it is**

> **the same expectation. The union contract tells you what the university's expectations are."**

> **"I don't necessarily write every day; that and committee work take up time."**

> **"…what has happened here is I have had more opportunities and more venues to do it in. It is easier to find and easier to get done. Greater expectations, but more opportunities."**

> **"It is not necessarily the amount of production you have to do although I hate writing and I only do in short concentrated spurts where I drive my family nuts when I am grumpy and I get up early in the morning and do it. But other people say I am productive and I just don't see it because it is such an effort for me to do it."**

In addition to participants sharing the amount of time they spent on research and writing, several participants discussed a new awareness about the time involved in the publication process. One participant had a great deal to learn given the number of manuscript revisions required for publication and balancing this responsibility with service and teaching. Another participant, who was at an institution with a higher research expectation than the first faculty position, described the research component as "an enigma…it has always been a mystery how much, and I preferred not to worry about it."

Career-life balance. Balance was also discussed from the standpoint of personal and professional responsibilities. Three participants spoke of the challenges of beginning or maintaining a family given demands of the job:

> **"I wasn't prepared at all for how large of an impact the tenure process would have on your personal life and around developing a family…I can't imagine how much harder this would be on women faculty members…I hear counselor education colleagues**

make negative comments about people who have had children."

"I didn't think I would try to have a family life and never be home in the evenings…I really think there are not enough support systems in place for women for them to successfully navigate through the programs as professionals and be happy healthy family members."

"..the hardest thing for me has been finding the balance to give my kids and family the time that I want to and yet still carving out enough time to get what needs to be done work wise…trying to work with a child there is difficult, so I try to do the best I can in their presence and then do a lot of work when they go to bed. It is working around their schedules rather than them working around yours."

One participant summed the importance of family and balance by stating:

"If I can't give my family the time they need then I won't keep the job. I love the job, but I am not going to sacrifice my family for it."

Discussion and Recommendations

The results of this study suggest numerous and unique factors influencing the experiences of counselor education faculty between years 5 through 10. The primary findings were consistent with the research on counselor education faculty career satisfaction (e.g., Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Hill, 2009). The unanticipated result of early career job changes is likewise consistent with the literature (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). All of the participants in the present study had changed institutions at least one time by the time of the interviews. The rationale for moves varied among participants. Current research regarding faculty job moves suggests that satisfaction, collegiality, professional conflicts,

organizational commitment, job involvement, and morale may be factors in career transitions (Johnsrud & Rosser; Olsen, 1993; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995; Reybold, 2005).

The categories derived in the study may be summarized to suggest that support, preparation, and balance are key issues for the participating counselor educators. Participants" responses indicated a desire for information about the expectations, differences among institutions, and the time commitment involved in the profession. These responses suggest the need for further preparation of counselor educators-in-training, increased mentoring opportunities and processes, and increased support for counselor educators.

Counselor Educator Preparation Programs

Counselor education doctoral programs may be an instrumental starting point in helping faculty adjust to their roles and maintain clarity and success throughout their careers. Interestingly, there appeared to be a strong predictor of how participants entered academe on their perceptions and experiences several years into their careers. This study found that information is needed regarding the expectations of faculty, the types of institutions at which one might work, and the time involved in the position. Doctoral preparation programs in counselor education are uniquely positioned to provide such information.

With respect to expectations, burgeoning counselor educators could be exposed to the information that blindsided some of our participants upon entrance into the profession. Doctoral seminars specific to the role and function of the faculty member may give a more clear sense of the expectations of faculty.

Several participants in our study believed that the vast majority of doctoral programs prepare students to teach at research extensive universities, creating role confusion for faculty should they enter other types of institutions (e.g., master"s

level, liberal arts). In fact, the majority of participants in this study began their faculty careers at universities that were not research I schools. Beyond simply reviewing Carnegie classifications, counselor education programs can describe how institutional type specifically impacts the day-to-day work lives and expectations for professors at various universities. A forum (either live or video conference) of counselor educators from various institutions (e.g., liberal arts college, masters level teaching university, and research I university) where professors describe their roles and time spent in research, teaching and service activities could prove to be a helpful initiative within counselor education programs.

Mentoring

Several participants spoke of the importance of mentoring as they progressed beyond the first faculty years. One participant discussed her experiences and continued learning:

> **"I have learned how to say no, I have learned that my chair has also been a great mentor…so I have learned how to balance myself in terms of when I am working, I work really hard, when I don't need to work really hard, I don't. But that has taken me almost 10 years to realize."**

Without mentors in the process, such learning and boundary setting may have been absent. Like the institutions that employ them, faculty invest in the success of their colleagues. Therefore, establishing mentoring relationships at every stage of faculty development may contribute to the success and satisfaction of counselor educators. Our participants suggested that they would like to have models at the mid-career mark to guide them through the tenure process and help them navigate new roles that accompany tenure and promotion (e.g., perceived or actual increased service responsibilities). Additionally, because institutions differ, faculty need mentoring if

they leave one school for another where the playing field for success (and tenure) may be markedly different from their previous school. In the words of one participant, with respect to new expectations for community service:

> **"…moving from where I was and going to a new location and taking a position as an assistant professor around the service area was that I didn't know anyone in the community…I didn't have any of those links to the community, so doing service was really hard for me to do. In fact, I didn't do it. I just stayed in the college and the associations. I still haven't connected well with parts of the community to do that kind of service."**

One might question this participant"s success with service had mentoring and community networking been a more visible part of the experience.

Faculty, particularly pre-tenured, are not likely to seek mentoring on their own (Sorcinelli, 1999). Satisfaction, and thereby success, may be increased with formal programs for pre-tenured faculty (Hill, 2009). Programs could establish these partnerships as faculty enter the institution and maintain partnerships throughout their pre-tenure experience. Established partnerships that receive programmatic support to continue through the tenure process may be a means of maintaining faculty success and satisfaction.

Support

The overwhelming voice of the participants is that they need support during their fifth to tenth years in academe. They need to know that they are competent and have reasonable contributions to make to the profession. They want to know if they are on track towards tenure, establishing identities in the department, and moving in the right direction in their management of responsibilities. Most notably, participants want support and feedback in order to be

successful, consistent with the research (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Olsen, 1993; Olsen et al., 1995; Reybold, 2005).

Additional support is noted in the proliferation of the counselor education profession. This is particularly important to faculty as they consider their future. One female participant remarked that she has a responsibility to the profession to ensure that support can continue:

> **"I would like to go up for full professor because women in academe are on the low end of being full professors in our field. So I would like to model what my mentor has modeled for me."**

This comment, consistent with the literature regarding challenges for women and minorities in academe (e.g., Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004), is further supported by the following participant‟s statement:

> **"I think men need to be much more cognizant of how we can be supportive of this type of situation…we don't even have child care structured into who we are and I think it is incredibly unfair."**

Support for counselor educators can take many shapes and can be derived from several sources. The comments of the two participants above speak to the diversity of sources of support: institutional, professional association, and collegial. As simple as it may appear, counselor educators, regardless of rank or years in the profession, might consider how they can advocate for change in their programs.

Limitations and Directions for Research

As with all research, and qualitative designs in particular, the results of this study must be applied with a readiness to continually evaluate. The small sample size was adequate to reach a saturation point within

the interviews (Patton, 1990), yet may not adequately reflect the experiences of all counselor educators. The nature of qualitative phenomenological research allows participants to give voice to their experiences. Yet the downside of such an approach makes comparison and contrast to the limited research finding that resulted from other forms of analysis unjustifiable. Furthermore, the final sample was limited in its diversity. As Bradley and Holcomb-McCoy (2004) note, there are unique experiences for counselor educators of non-minority cultural identities. Related, the fact that none of the participants were still at their first institution translates that the interviewees‟ responses varied between expectations they originally had as doctoral students and newly formed expectations with respect to moving to new institutions.

Face-to-face interviews allowing for greater interaction would have been the preferred method for conducting the interviews. Geographical and financial limitations did not allow for travel by the researchers. Further, the interviews, while semi-structured in nature, were conducted independently by two researchers. As a result, the responses may have changed had both researchers been involved in all interviews or if all interviews had been conducted by one individual alone.

Finally, the present study does not have a true comparison point with existing research. The first challenge was finding existing literature and a definition of faculty near their tenure years (5 to 10). The researchers acknowledge the limitation in the lack of a standardized definition, yet simultaneously propose a new foundation for further research.

The present study provides a step forward in understanding the experiences of counselor education faculty. Future research may be conducted to better ascertain the experiences of faculty at this and later stages to provide direction to enhance and ensure productive and satisfying careers. Future studies that explore career development issues for faculty at various stages may provide

greater insight into their experiences and needs. Building directly upon the results of the present study, the profession may be better served by exploring the career selection criteria for counselor educators. Specifically, what factors influence faculty career selection? Exploration of career development needs and opportunities may be of interest and help delineate successful career development for counselor education faculty as they reach the midpoints and move into the latter stages of their careers.

A large and unexpected result this sample produced was the fact that none of the participants remained in their first position. Faculty satisfaction in particular may warrant additional research in light of fundings regarding departure from academia (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Reybold, 2005). Research on the frequency of counselor education position changes is needed to answer several questions. Do counselor educators tend to make transitions at a greater rate (i.e., number of positions per year of employment) compared to other academic disciplines? How do factors such as salary compression and the greater use of portable defined-contribution retirement plan (Conley, 2007) rather than university defined-benefit plans (based on years of service and salary) contribute to the movement of counselor educators from one university position to another? Studying the attrition rates and reasons for job transitioning have implications for preparing the next generation of the professoriate. The current economic and employment markets may have implications for career trends in the profession.

Lastly, research regarding the relationship between support and mentoring in doctoral training, initial faculty positions, and continued work in academe may illuminate the reasons behind counselor educators" transiency and stability over a career. Given current tenure and academic career structures, the academy itself may be challenged to keep up with the changing job trends of counselor education faculty.

Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that counselor educators" experiences between years 5 through 10 can be categorized according to support, preparation, and balance. As participants considered the question, "If you had to do it over again, would you still pursue being a faculty member," most were affirmative. It is important to note that counselor education preparation programs, mentoring, and support can play critical roles in these responses and counselor educators" experiences.

References

Anderson-Nathe, B. (2008). Investigating not-knowing: Research methodology. *Child & Youth Services, 30*, 27-42.

Baker-Fletcher, K., Carr, D., Menn, E., & Ramsay, N.J. (2005). Taking stock at mid-career: Challenges and opportunities for faculty. *Teaching Theology and Religion, 8*, 3-10.

Bradley, C., & Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2004). African American counselor educators: Their experiences, challenges, and recommendations. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 43*, 258-273.

Conley, V. M. (2007). *Survey of changes in faculty retirement policies 2007*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Professors

Connolly, K.M., & Myers, J.E. (2003). Wellness and mattering: The role of holistic factors in job satisfaction. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 40,* 152-160.

Conway, M.B. (2006). Professional development of a new assistant professor in counselor education: A model for navigating the 1st year. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education, and Development, 45*, 138-147.

Creswell, J.W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (3rd ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Hill, N.R. (2009). An empirical exploration of the occupational satisfaction of counselor educators: The influence of gender, tenure status, and minority status. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 87*, 55-61.

Johnsrud, L.K., & Rosser, V.J. (2002).

Faculty members" morale and their intention to leave. *Journal of Higher Education, 73,* 518-542.

Lemon, N., & Taylor, H. (1998). Caring in causality: The phenomenology of nursing care. In N. Hayes (Ed.), *Doing qualitative analysis in psychology* (pp. 227-243).

Magnuson, S. (2002). New assistant professors of counselor education: Their 1st year. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 41,* 306-320.

Magnuson, S., Black, L.L., & Lahman, M.K.E. (2006). The 2000 cohort of new assistant professors of counselor education: Year 3. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 45,* 162-179.

Magnuson, S., Norem, K., & Haberstroh, S. (2001). New assistant professors of counselor education: Their preparation and their induction. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 40,* 220-229.

Magnuson, S., Shaw, H., Tubin, B., & Norem, K. (2004). Assistant professors of counselor education: First and second year experiences. *Journal of Professional Counseling: Practice, Theory, and Research, 32,* 3-18.

Niles, S.G., Akos, P., & Cutler, H. (2001). Counselor educator strategies for success. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 40,* 276-291.

Neuman, W.L. (2006). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches (6th ed.).* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Olsen, D. (1993). Work satisfaction and stress in the first and third year of academic appointment. *Journal of Higher Education, 64,* 453-471.

Olsen, D., Maple, S.A., & Stage, F.K. (1995). Women and minority faculty job satisfaction: Professional role interests, professional satisfactions, and institutional fit. *Journal of Higher Education, 33,* 267-293.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd ed.).* London: Sage Publications.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Reybold, L.E. (2005). Surrendering the dream: Early career conflict and faculty dissatisfaction thresholds. *Journal of Career Development, 32,* 107-121.

Romano, J.L., Hoesing, R., O"Donovan, K., Weinsheimer, J. (2004). Faculty at mid-career: A program to enhance teaching and learning. *Innovative Higher Education, 29,* 21-48.

Snygg, D. (1935). Te relative difficulty of mechanically equivalent tasks: I Human learning. *Journal of Genetic Psychology, 47,* 299-320.

Sorcinelli, M.D. (1999). Post-tenure review through post-tenure development: What linking senior faculty and technology taught us. *Innovative Higher Education, 24,* 61-72.

Dana Heller Levitt is Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling and Educational Leadership at Montclair State University. She has 8 years of experience as a counselor educator and has published and presented in areas of ethics, counselor development, and body image/eating disorders.

David A. Hermon is Professor in the Counseling Program at Marshall University. He has 14 years of experience as a counselor educator and has published and presented in the areas of wellness, college student development, and counselor development.