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Faculty Search Experiences of Assistant Professors of Counselor Education

Abstract

Using an online quantitative survey, the primary objective of this study was to investigate the faculty application experiences of assistant professors of counselor education ($N = 159$). The counselor educators in this sample completed a median of two off-campus interviews and a median of one on-campus interview. They received a median of one offer for any faculty position and a median of one offer for an assistant professor position on the tenure-track. Assistant professors on the tenure-track differed from those not on the tenure track on the following variables: demographic and professional characteristics, application strategies, credentials/qualifications at the time of their applications, the importance of decisional criteria in applying for and accepting faculty positions, work experiences, and occupational satisfaction. The implications of this survey research for counselor education faculty positions and searches are discussed.

Keywords

assistant professors, faculty positions, occupational satisfaction, faculty searches, counselor education

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the application experiences of assistant professors of counselor education ($N = 159$). The counselor educators in this sample completed a median of two off-campus interviews and a median of one on-campus interview. They received a median of one offer for any faculty position and a median of one offer for an assistant professor position on the tenure-track. Assistant professors on the tenure-track differed from those not on the tenure track on the following variables: demographic and professional characteristics, application strategies, credentials/qualifications at the time they submitted their application materials, the importance of decisional criteria in applying for and accepting faculty positions, and work experiences and satisfaction.

Keywords: assistant professors, faculty positions, occupational satisfaction, faculty searches, counselor education

In the field of professional counseling, the master's degree is the entry-level degree for clinical practice, while doctoral-level training is reserved for preparing program graduates in the areas of counselor training, leadership, and supervision (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2024; Snow & Field, 2020). Though most graduates of CACREP-accredited doctoral programs do not become full-time counselor educators, a substantial minority do (e.g., Lawrence & Hatchett, 2024; Schweiger et al., 2012; Zimpfer, 1996). For example, Lawrence and Hatchett (2024) recently investigated the occupational outcomes of 314 graduates of CACREP-accredited doctoral programs who completed their degree programs between 2018-2019. They reported 41% of these graduates had some type of faculty position in higher education, while 24% specifically had assistant professor positions in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. While not the most frequent occupational outcome, an assistant professor position in a counseling program is a valued

occupational outcome for many graduates of doctoral programs in counselor and supervision (Woo et al., 2017).

To prepare for a faculty position in counselor education, job seekers need an accurate understanding of both the higher education job market and the qualifications typically needed for securing an entry-level faculty position in counselor education (Bodenhorn et al., 2014). Regarding the former, several research teams have investigated the faculty job market and analyzed posted advertisements for faculty positions in counselor education (e.g., Bernard, 2006; Bodenhorn et al., 2014; Maples & Macari, 1998). In the most recent study in this area, Bodenhorn et al. reviewed the position announcements posted in the CESNET listserv from 2005 through 2009, and they categorized these openings according to academic rank, location, educational requirements, counseling specialization, teaching experience, counseling experience, and research experience. While there have been regular updates on the state of the faculty

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job market in counselor education, there has been negligible research on the characteristics and qualifications of those who have been successful in this job market.

In one of these earlier studies in this area, Maples and Macari (1998) evaluated the posted vacancies for faculty positions in counselor education during 1995-1996 along with the characteristics of those who had been hired to fill these vacancies. These hired faculty members were primarily female (62%) and White (81%). Most (71%) had terminal degrees in counselor education, the most common terminal degree was a Ph.D. (82%), and slightly over half (55.2%) had their terminal degrees for at least one year before starting their faculty positions. While many of these individuals (44%) did not have any prior teaching experience, those with prior teaching experience had an average of five years of experience before beginning their faculty positions.

In a subsequent study, Magnuson et al. (2001) created a profile of a small sample ($N = 49$) of assistant professors of counselor education who began their first faculty positions in the fall of 1999. In Magnuson et al.'s sample, 71% of the new assistant professors were female and 29% male; 82% were European American, 10% were African American, 4% were Native American, and 2.0% were Hispanic. Regarding their terminal degrees, 78% had Ph.D. degrees, and almost half (47%) had received their terminal degrees in 1999. Approximately two-thirds had terminal degrees in counseling or counselor education. Before starting their positions, 31% did not have any peer-reviewed journal articles; those with prior publications reported a median of one publication in a state journal and a median of two publications in national journals. Regarding prior counseling experience, 71% reported prior counseling experience in community agencies, 37% experience in private practice, and 49% experience in college counseling centers. In applying for faculty positions, these assistant professors had submitted a median of eight applications and completed a median of two on-campus interviews. These assistant professors were also asked an open-ended question about the factors that affected their decision to accept their current

positions. Some of the reported factors included geographical location (including proximity to family and opportunities for spouses), salary, fit with current faculty/program, the university's commitment to diversity, working conditions, and the reputation of the counselor education program. There are several limitations to the study by Magnuson et al. that limit its utility for those currently interested in attaining assistant professor positions in counselor education. Most obviously, there have been substantial changes in counselor education since the study by Magnuson et al. was published. Not only has there been tremendous growth in the field of counselor education (CACREP, 2019), but the qualifications for core faculty have also become more stringent (CACREP, 2019, 2024). Furthermore, Magnuson et al. collected data from a relatively small sample ($N = 49$) of assistant professors, and they asked participants only a few questions about their credentials and their priorities in accepting a faculty position.

Another important issue—and one that has seemed to increase since the study by Magnuson et al. (2001)—is the decrease in tenure-track faculty lines in counselor education programs along with a corresponding increase in the number of full- and part-time positions not on the tenure-track (e.g., Isaacs & Sabella, 2013). Recent research on available faculty positions in counselor education also seems consistent with this trend (Bodenhorn et al., 2014; Lawrence & Hatchett, 2024). While some inferences can be made about the differences between tenure- and non-tenure-track positions based on the content of position announcements, more systematic research on the similarities and differences between tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professor positions might provide even more clarity. Greater clarity on these similarities and differences may help aspiring counselor educators make more informed decisions in applying to and accepting available faculty positions.

In response to these identified concerns, the overall objective of the current study was to conduct

a quantitative survey on the application experiences, concomitant qualifications and credentials, and work experiences of assistant professors currently employed at CACREP-accredited programs.

Toward this end, the following research questions were investigated: What were the faculty search strategies used by these assistant professors in applying for available faculty positions, including the importance of various factors in deciding whether to apply for and eventually accept an offer of a faculty position? What were the credentials and qualifications of these assistant professors at the time they submitted their application materials for the current positions? To what extent did tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors differ in their application strategies and their qualifications at the time they submitted their application materials? How do tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors differ in their current teaching loads, other work responsibilities, and occupational satisfaction?

The results from this study will not only resolve several unanswered questions in the counselor education literature but may also offer practical benefits for those seeking assistant professor positions in counselor education. For example, doctoral students can compare their credentials and qualifications to those who have successfully attained assistant professor positions. Faculty in doctoral programs might also use the same information to better prepare their students for available faculty positions. Finally, it might also be helpful for doctoral students—and those who train them—to have updated normative data on the search experiences and qualifications of those who are successful in attaining assistant professor positions.

Method

Procedure

Prior to collecting data, approval for this research was secured from my university's Institutional

Review Board (IRB), and all subsequent research procedures complied with the *Code of Ethics* of the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014).

During September 2022, all counseling programs accredited by CACREP were identified through a search of the agency's online directory (<https://www.cacrep.org/directory>). This search resulted in the identification of accredited counseling programs at 415 colleges and universities. The program websites of all accredited programs were searched to identify counselor educators with any variant of the title of *assistant professor* (e.g., assistant professor, clinical assistant professor). As a result of this search process, 968 assistant professors of counselor education were eventually identified. The names and email addresses of these assistant professors were added to a database for subsequent survey distribution. In October 2022, these assistant professors received a solicitation email about the study that included a link to a Qualtrics survey. A reminder email was sent 7-10 days after the first email solicitation, and a second reminder email was sent 7-10 days after the first reminder email. To encourage participation, survey participants had the opportunity to win one of four \$25 gift certificates.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument assessed three general domains. The first domain inquired about demographic and professional characteristics; the second domain inquired about faculty position search strategies, ratings of the importance of factors in deciding whether to apply for and accept an offered position, and items about one's credentials and qualifications at the time applications were submitted; and the third domain inquired about current work experiences and occupational satisfaction. The items ($n = 14$) for the first section were borrowed from previous surveys by Hatchett (2020, 2021). The items ($n = 21$) for the second section were created specifically for this study. Ideas for these items were informed by the general faculty search literature in higher education (e.g., Vick et al., 2016), the faculty search literature

specific to counselor education (e.g., Bodenhorn et al., 2014; Magnuson et al., 2001), and personal experience in serving on over 10 assistant professor search committees. The items ($n = 12$) for the third section were also borrowed from previous surveys used by Hatchett (2020, 2021).

Prior to survey distribution, the survey was evaluated by four counselor educators: an associate professor, two assistant professors hired within the past three years, and a full-time instructor who was nearing completion of a doctoral degree in counselor education. All reviewers reported that the survey had adequate content validity, and they did not recommend any significant changes to the survey items.

Response Rate

Out of the total population of identified assistant professors ($N = 968$), 249 individuals began the Qualtrics survey. Four respondents were removed because they now held the rank of associate professor, and 17 additional respondents were removed because they did not answer at least 75% of the survey items. After these deletions, the final sample size was 228, which when compared to the total population of assistant professors, represented a response rate of 24.0%.

Participants

Demographic Characteristics

In the final sample, 159 (69.7%) participants identified as female, 63 (27.6%) as male, five (2.2%) as non-binary, and one (.4%) as a transgender male. Almost two-thirds ($n = 143$, 63.3%) described themselves as White, 43 (19.0%) as Black/African American, 16 (7.1%) as Asian, two (0.9%) as American Indian/Alaskan Native, nine (4.0%) as having more than one racial background, and 13 (5.8%) as other. Additionally, 25 (11.0%) participants described themselves as Hispanic. (Racial classifications and the assessment of Hispanic ethnicity were based on U.S. Census categories.) Their ages ranged from 27 to 67 ($Mdn = 38.00$, $M = 39.73$, $SD = 8.42$). Regarding current

relationship status, 159 (70.0%) participants were married, 38 (16.7%) were single/never married, 17 (7.5%) were in a committed partnership, and 13 (5.7%) were divorced. Slightly over half ($n = 122$, 53.7%) of the participants reported having no children under the age of 18 under their care, 54 (23.8%) reported one child, 40 (17.6%) reported two children, 10 (4.4%) reported three children, and one participant (0.4%) reported four children.

Professional Characteristics

The years during which these participants received their doctoral degrees ranged from 1994 to 2022 ($Mdn = 2019.00$, $M = 2017.80$, $SD = 4.06$). Regarding the nature of these doctoral degrees, 214 (93.9%) participants had Ph.D.s, 10 (4.4%) had Ed.D.s, and 4 (1.8%) identified their doctoral degrees as other. Approximately three-fourths ($n = 177$, 78.0%) received their doctoral degrees from public universities, 32 ($n = 14.1\%$) from private universities with a religious mission, nine (4.0%) from private (non-profit) universities without a religious mission, and nine (4.0%) from for-profit universities. Approximately nine-tenths ($n = 204$, 89.5%) completed their doctoral training through traditional on-campus degree programs, 21 (9.2%) through online degree programs with residency requirements, and three (1.3%) through fully online degree programs.

Regarding the disciplines in which they received their doctoral degrees, 211 (92.5%) received their doctoral degrees in counseling/counselor education and supervision, eight (3.5%) in rehabilitation counseling, two (0.9%) in educational leadership, one (0.4%) in counseling psychology, and six (2.6%) in another discipline. Participants were asked to identify the one counseling specialization with which they most strongly identified; clinical mental health counseling was most frequently selected ($n = 97$, 42.5%), followed in frequency by counselor education and supervision ($n = 56$, 24.6%), school counseling ($n = 35$, 15.4%), clinical rehabilitation counseling ($n = 19$, 8.3%), marriage, couple, and family counseling ($n = 10$, 4.4%), addiction counseling ($n = 5$, 2.2%), career

counseling ($n = 2$, 0.9%), college counseling and student affairs ($n = 1$, 0.4%), and *other* ($n = 3$, 1.3%).

Current Faculty Positions

Most of these assistant professors had been employed in their current positions for a brief period. The number of years of experience in their current positions ranged from less than one to 12 years ($Mdn = 2.00$, $M = 2.36$, $SD = 2.12$); nearly a fifth ($n = 55$, 24.6%) were still in their first year. Regarding current faculty titles, 190 (83.3%) participants held the title of assistant professor, 24 (10.5%) the title of clinical assistant professor, five (2.2%) the title of visiting assistant professor, four (1.8%) the title of teaching assistant professor, three (1.3%) the title of assistant professor of practice, and two (1.0%) identified a title of *other*.

Concerning tenure-track status, 161 (71.9%) participants were currently in a tenure-track position, whereas sixty-three participants (28.1%) were not. Tenure-track status varied based on faculty title [$\chi^2(5) = 102.93$, $p < .001$, $V = .68$]. While most ($n = 159$, 85.0%) of the traditional assistant professors were on the tenure-track, none of the assistant professors with alternate titles (e.g., clinical assistant professors) were on the tenure-track. Across the entire sample, two-thirds ($N = 148$, 65.8%) of the participants were employed at public universities, 50 (22.2%) were employed at private universities with a religious mission, 24 (10.7%) were employed at private (non-profit) universities without a religious mission, and three (1.3%) were employed at for-profit universities. Tenure-track status also varied based on the nature of the university at which these counselor educators were currently employed [$\chi^2(3) = 20.90$, $p < .001$, $V = .31$]. Assistant professors on the tenure-track were more likely to be employed at public universities (*adjusted standardized residual* = 3.5) and less likely to be employed at private, non-religious (*adjusted standardized residual* = -3.0) and at for-profit (*adjusted standardized residual* = -2.8) universities.

Data Analysis Strategy

As an exploratory quantitative study, most survey responses were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. However, several inferential statistical tests (chi-square, Mann-Whitney U, independent sample t-tests) were run to compare tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors on various survey responses and for other analyses. These group comparisons had sufficient statistical power to identify small-to-medium effect sizes (Cohen, 1988). Prior to running any analyses, the dataset was examined for extreme outliers and unusual values; none were identified. In some of the independent sample t-tests, the degrees of freedom were reduced because the homogeneity of variance assumption was violated.

Results

Application Experiences

The number of applications submitted by these participants in searching for their most recent faculty positions ranged from 0 to 40 ($Mdn = 3.50$, $M = 6.51$, $SD = 7.65$). The number of off-campus interviews (e.g., phone, video, conference) completed ranged from 0 to 17 ($Mdn = 2.00$, $M = 3.09$, $SD = 2.66$), and the number of on-campus interviews ranged from 0 to 8 ($Mdn = 1.00$, $M = 1.59$, $SD = 1.39$). The number of offers received for any faculty position ranged from 1 to 8 ($Mdn = 1.00$, $M = 1.46$, $SD = .95$), and the number of offers received for an assistant professor position on the tenure-track ranged from 0 to 8 ($Mdn = 1.00$, $M = 1.04$, $SD = 1.04$).

Participants were asked how they found out about the openings for their current faculty positions. Word of mouth was most frequently selected ($n = 79$; 34.6%), followed in frequency by both CESNET-L ($n = 73$; 32.0%) and *HigherEdJobs* ($n = 73$; 32.0%), the *Chronicle of Higher Education* ($n = 34$; 14.9%), a counseling conference ($n = 33$; 14.5%), networking ($n = 32$; 14.0%), *Inside Higher Ed* ($n = 17$; 7.5%), and *other* ($n = 22$, 9.6%). Some of the other avenues reported

in an available text box included invitations by department chairs, LinkedIn, university websites, and email.

Credentials and Qualifications at the Time of Their Applications

When these participants submitted applications for their current faculty positions, 129 (56.6%) had already defended their dissertations, and 121 (53.1%) had already received their doctoral degrees. At the time of their applications, 160 (70.2%) had a credential of a licensed professional counselor (e.g., LPC, LPCC, LPCC-S), 121 (53.1%) a credential of a Nationally Certified Counselor, 50 (21.9%) a credential of a licensed/certified school counselor, 25 (11.0%) a credential of a licensed/certified rehabilitation counselor, 14 (6.1%) a credential of a licensed/certified alcohol and drug counselor, and eight (3.5%) a credential of a registered play therapist. (These credentials were not mutually exclusive; some participants reported more than one.) Also, at the time they submitted their applications, they had a median of five ($M = 6.57$, $SD = 5.64$) years of full-time experience as professional counselors. They had co-taught a median of three ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 3.13$) courses with other faculty and a median of four ($M = 7.65$, $SD = 8.67$) courses independently. They had published a median of two ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 3.11$) articles in peer-reviewed journals. They had delivered a median of five ($M = 6.99$, $SD = 8.01$) presentations at national or international conferences and a median of five ($M = 6.70$, $SD = 6.40$) presentations at state or regional conferences. Finally, they had provided clinical supervision to a median of 12 ($M = 19.30$, $SD = 18.38$) students enrolled in practicum and internship courses.

A third of the sample ($n = 75$, 32.9%) had previous full-time experience as counselor educators before attaining their current faculty positions. Regarding these previous faculty positions, 43 participants had previously been employed as assistant professors, 17 as lecturers/instructors, seven as visiting professors, five as assistant clinical professors, four as clinical

coordinators, two as assistant teaching professors, three as core faculty, and nine as other. The number of years of prior full-time faculty experience ranged from 1 to 26 ($Mdn = 3.00$, $M = 3.97$, $SD = 4.03$).

Decisional Criteria

Table 1 presents these assistant professors' ratings of the importance of 12 factors in deciding *whether to apply* for an advertised counselor education position, whereas Table 2 presents their ratings of the importance of 15 factors in deciding *whether to accept an offer* for an assistant professor position.

Current Work Responsibilities and Occupational Satisfaction

Participants taught a median of nine ($M = 8.60$, $SD = 2.90$) semester hours each fall and spring semester. Participants estimated the percentage of their worktime typically spent across teaching, clinical supervision, research, service, and administration. Participants reported spending a median of 50% of their worktime on teaching ($M = 47.73$, $SD = 18.43$), a median of 5% of their worktime on clinical supervision ($M = 8.67$, $SD = 10.87$), a median of 15% of their worktime on research ($M = 19.22$, $SD = 15.73$), a median of 15% of their worktime on service ($M = 15.51$, $SD = 10.07$), and a median of 5% of their worktime on administrative responsibilities ($M = 9.92$, $SD = 14.24$).

Three survey items inquired about current occupational satisfaction. Participants were asked to rate their overall level of occupational satisfaction: 71 (31.6%) reported they were *very satisfied*, 103 (45.8%) reported they were *satisfied*, 23 (10.2%) reported they were *neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*, 20 (8.9%) reported they were *dissatisfied*, and 8 (3.6%) reported they were *very dissatisfied* in their current positions. When asked about the likelihood of seeking another faculty position within the next five years, 38 (16.9%) respondents reported that they were *very unlikely to do so*, 50 (22.2%) reported they were *unlikely to do so*, 58 (25.8%) reported they were *neither likely nor unlikely to do*

so, 35 (15.6%) reported they were *likely to do so*, and 44 (19.6%) reported they were *very likely to do so*. Finally, participants were asked if they planned

to leave the field of counselor education altogether (yes/no): 47 (20.9%) reported they were considering this course of action.

Table 1

How important were the following characteristics in deciding whether to apply for an advertised position in counselor education?

Factor	<i>Especially Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Somewhat Important</i>	<i>Slightly Important</i>	<i>Not Important</i>
Geographic location	130 (57.0%)	61 (26.8%)	21 (9.2%)	8 (3.5%)	8 (3.5%)
Emphasis on teaching	51 (22.6%)	107 (47.3%)	48 (21.2%)	14 (6.2%)	6 (2.7%)
Emphasis on research	25 (11.0%)	83 (36.4%)	72 (31.6%)	29 (12.7%)	19 (8.3%)
Work with doctoral students	18 (7.9%)	43 (18.9%)	54 (23.7%)	39 (17.1%)	74 (32.5%)
Reputation/status of program	40 (17.5%)	73 (32.0%)	68 (29.8%)	36 (15.8%)	11 (4.8%)
Diversity of university/program	50 (21.9%)	87 (38.2%)	62 (27.2%)	17 (7.5%)	12 (5.3%)
Perceived work/life balance	117 (51.3%)	80 (35.1%)	20 (8.8%)	7 (3.1%)	4 (1.8%)
Opportunities for summer teaching	26 (11.4%)	64 (28.1%)	61 (26.8%)	27 (11.8%)	50 (21.9%)
Opportunities for outside clinical work	33 (14.5%)	62 (27.2%)	44 (19.3%)	38 (16.7%)	51 (22.4%)
Proximity to family/significant other	112 (49.3%)	38 (16.7%)	24 (10.6%)	22 (9.7%)	31 (13.7%)
Job opportunities for significant other	71 (31.3%)	45 (19.8%)	26 (11.5%)	15 (6.6%)	70 (30.8%)
Quality of local schools for children	42 (18.6%)	36 (15.9%)	19 (8.4%)	8 (3.5%)	121 (53.5%)

Differences Between Tenure-Track and Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors

The next set of analyses examined the extent to which tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors differed on the following variables: demographic and professional characteristics, application strategies, credentials/qualifications at the time they submitted their application materials, the importance of decisional criteria in applying for and accepting faculty positions, current work experiences, and occupational satisfaction.

Demographic and Professional Characteristics

Tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors did not differ in terms of binary gender [$\chi^2(1) = 1.68, p = .19, V = .09$], race dichotomized as

White or Non-White [$\chi^2(1) = .87, p = .35, V = .06$], current relationship status [$\chi^2(3) = 1.01, p = .80, V = .07$], or in the likelihood of having any (yes/no) dependent children under the age of 18 [$\chi^2(1) = .23, p = .63, V = .03$]. They differed in age [$t(219) = -3.03, p = .003, d = -.45$]; tenure-track assistant professors reported an average age of 38.75 ($SD = 7.75$) compared to an average age of 42.48 ($SD = 9.40$) for those not in tenure-track positions. The two groups did not differ in the counseling specialization to which they most strongly identified [$\chi^2(8) = 9.10, p = .33, V = .20$], the title (e.g., Ph.D.) of their doctoral degrees [$\chi^2(2) = .74, p = .69, V = .06$], or the date of their terminal degrees [$t(77) = 1.64, p = .11, d = .31$]. The two groups differed in the type of university (e.g., public, private) from which they received their terminal degrees [$\chi^2(3) = 9.66, p = .02, V = .21$]. Those on the tenure-track were more likely to have received

Table 2

In accepting the offer for your current position, how important were the following factors in making that decision?

Factor	<i>Especially Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Somewhat Important</i>	<i>Slightly Important</i>	<i>Not Important</i>
Geographic location	126 (55.8%)	57 (25.2%)	25 (11.1%)	6 (2.7%)	12 (5.3%)
Salary	79 (35.1%)	103 (45.8%)	35 (15.6%)	7 (3.1%)	1 (0.4%)
Benefit package	64 (28.3%)	104 (46.0%)	44 (19.5%)	10 (4.4%)	4 (1.8%)
Emphasis on teaching	45 (19.9%)	109 (48.2%)	53 (23.5%)	14 (6.2%)	5 (2.2%)
Emphasis on research	25 (11.0%)	79 (34.8%)	76 (33.5%)	29 (12.8%)	18 (7.9%)
Work with doctoral students	16 (7.0%)	31 (13.7%)	44 (19.4%)	46 (20.3%)	90 (39.6%)
Reputation/status of program	42 (18.5%)	73 (32.2%)	64 (28.2%)	33 (14.5%)	15 (6.6%)
Diversity of university/program	45 (19.8%)	78 (34.4%)	73 (32.2%)	17 (7.5%)	14 (6.2%)
Perceived collegiality among faculty	105 (46.3%)	95 (41.9%)	22 (9.7%)	3 (1.3%)	2 (0.9%)
Opportunities for summer teaching	24 (10.6%)	68 (30.1%)	59 (26.1%)	28 (12.4%)	47 (20.8%)
Opportunities for outside clinical work	31 (13.7%)	53 (23.3%)	46 (20.3%)	43 (18.9%)	54 (23.8%)
Perceived work/life balance	110 (48.5%)	74 (32.6%)	31 (13.7%)	9 (4.0%)	3 (1.3%)
Proximity to family/significant other	107 (47.6%)	40 (17.8%)	18 (8.0%)	21 (9.3%)	39 (17.3%)
Job opportunities for significant other	61 (27.2%)	41 (18.3%)	20 (8.9%)	24 (10.7%)	78 (34.8%)
Quality of local schools for children	39 (17.4%)	34 (15.2%)	20 (8.9%)	8 (3.6%)	123 (54.9%)

their terminal degrees from public universities (*adjusted standardized residual* = 2.5), whereas those not on the tenure-track were more likely to have attained their degrees from a for-profit university (*adjusted standardized residual* = -2.6).

Application Strategies

Tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors differed in the number of available positions to which they applied [$t(123) = 2.33, p = .02, d = .33$]; tenure-track assistant professors applied to an average of 7.31 positions ($SD = 7.81$) compared to an average of 4.78 positions ($SD = 7.13$) for non-tenure-track assistant professors. Tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors also differed in the number of off-

campus interviews completed [$t(222) = 2.09, p = .04, d = .31$]; tenure-track assistant professors completed an average of 3.35 ($SD = 2.83$) off-campus interviews compared to an average of 2.52 interviews ($SD = 2.11$) for non-tenure-track assistant professors. They also differed in the number of on-campus interviews completed [$t(222) = 2.62, p = .009, d = .39$]; tenure-track assistant professors completed an average 1.75 ($SD = 1.48$) on-campus interviews compared to an average of 1.21 ($SD = 1.11$) for those not on the tenure-track. They also differed in the number of offers received for any faculty position [$t(194) = 2.34, p = .02, d = .28$]; tenure-track assistant professors received an average of 1.53 ($SD = 1.06$) offers compared to an average of 1.27 ($SD = .60$) offers for those in non-tenure-track positions. Finally, the two groups

differed in the number of offers received specifically for assistant professor positions on the tenure-track [$t(216) = 11.91, p < .001, d = 1.32$]; tenure-track assistant professors received an average of 1.38 ($SD = 1.02$) offers compared to an average of .19 ($SD = .47$) offers for those currently in non-tenure track positions.

Credentials and Qualifications at the Time of Their Applications

At the time of their applications, tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors were equally likely to already have the credential of a licensed professor counselor [$\chi^2(1) = 1.51, p = .22, V = .08$], a certified/licensed school counselor [$\chi^2(1) = 2.37, p = .12, V = .10$], a certified/licensed rehabilitation counselor [$\chi^2(1) = .07, p = .80, V = .02$], or a Nationally Certified Counselor [$\chi^2(1) = 2.94, p = .09, V = .11$]. They did not differ in the number of years of counseling experience [$t(222) = -1.50, p = .13, d = -.22$], the number of courses co-taught with other faculty [$t(222) = 1.44, p = .15, d = .21$] or taught independently [$t(95) = -1.96, p = .05, d = -.32$], the number of national/international [$t(222) = .02, p = .98, d = .00$] or regional/state conference presentations [$t(222) = .58, p = .57, d = .09$], or the number of students previously supervised in practicum or internship courses [$t(88) = -1.33, p = .19, d = -.23$]. The two groups differed in the number of peer-reviewed journal articles [$t(222) = 2.33, p = .02, d = .35$]; tenure-track assistant professors had an average of 2.81 ($SD = 3.25$) articles at the time of their applications compared to an average of 1.75 ($SD = 2.53$) articles for those in non-tenure-track positions.

Decisional Criteria

The next set of analyses compared tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors on the factors that influenced their decisions on whether to apply to and accept a faculty position in counselor education. In deciding *whether to apply* for an advertised position, tenure-track assistant professors placed a greater importance on an advertised position's emphasis on research ($U = 3012, z = -$

4.93, $p < .001$), whereas non-tenure-track assistant professors placed a greater importance on the perceived opportunity for outside clinical work ($U = 6015, z = 2.22, p = .03$) and the position's proximity to family or a significant other ($U = 6033, z = 2.45, p = .01$). In deciding *whether to accept* an offer for a position, tenure-track assistant professors placed a greater importance on a position's emphasis on research ($U = 3207, z = -4.32, p < .001$) and opportunities for summer teaching ($U = 3937, z = -2.35, p = .02$), whereas those not on the tenure-track placed a greater importance on a position's opportunities for outside clinical work ($U = 5880, z = 2.11, p = .04$) and proximity to family or a significant other ($U = 5951, z = 2.54, p = .01$).

Work Responsibilities and Occupational Satisfaction

Tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors did not differ in the number of semester hours typically taught in the fall and spring semesters [$t(86) = -1.15, p = .26, d = -.20$] or the percentage of worktime spent on clinical supervision ($U = 5660, z = 1.72, p = .09$). However, those on the tenure-track reported spending a lower percentage of their worktime on both teaching ($U = 6063, z = 2.29, p = .02$) and administration ($U = 5944, z = 2.08, p = .04$) and a higher percentage of their worktime on both research ($U = 1979, z = -7.16, p < .001$) and service ($U = 3295, z = -4.20, p < .001$) compared to those not on the tenure-track.

Tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors did not differ in overall occupational satisfaction ($U = 4869, z = -.50, p = .62$) or in a dichotomous inclination (yes/no) towards leaving counselor education altogether [$\chi^2(1) = 1.38, p = .24, V = .08$]. However, non-tenure-track assistant professors reported that they were more likely to consider another faculty position within the next five years compared to tenure-track assistant professors ($U = 4095, z = -2.29, p = .02$).

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the faculty application experiences of assistant professors of counselor education currently employed in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. Toward this end, assistant professors provided quantitative survey data about their experiences in applying to advertised positions, their credentials/qualifications at the time of these applications, the decisional criteria used in evaluating available positions and position offers, and the outcomes of their faculty searches. In addition, they also provided survey data on their current work experiences and levels of occupational satisfaction. A secondary objective was to evaluate the extent to which tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors differed on many of the abovementioned variables. The results are quite extensive, so to conserve space, the discussion will be focused on those results considered to be most noteworthy and those that can be directly compared to the existing counselor education literature.

Demographic and Professional Characteristics

Consistent with other recent studies on counselor educators (Hatchett, 2020; Magnuson et al., 2001; Maples & Macari, 1998), a clear majority of the assistant professors in this sample identified as female. Regarding racial classifications, 36% of the assistant professors in this study described themselves as Non-White, a proportion that exceeds the percentages of minority faculty typically reported in other studies of counselor education faculty (Hatchett, 2020; Magnuson et al., 2001; Maples & Macari, 1998). To the extent that this sample is representative of the total population of assistant professors in counseling programs, these results provide evidence for increased racial diversity among counselor educators, at least at the rank of assistant professor.

Application Experiences

The assistant professors in this sample—irrespective of current tenure-track status—applied to slightly fewer faculty positions than the assistant

professors in the study by Magnuson et al. (2001). It is unclear why this occurred. Overall, the number of applications submitted by counselor educators appears to be rather modest compared to the number of applications typically submitted by individuals applying for assistant professor positions in other academic disciplines (e.g., Notman, & Woolston, 2020). Faculty positions in counselor education are much less competitive than those in many other disciplines, such as English (Bartholomae, 2011), and graduates of doctoral programs in counselor education have many career opportunities outside of higher education (e.g., Schweiger et al., 2012).

Credentials and Qualifications at the Time of Applications

The credentials and qualifications of the assistant professors in this study were somewhat comparable to those reported by Magnuson et al. (2001), but it was difficult to make direct comparisons because these constructs were operationalized differently in the two studies. For example, in the Magnuson et al. study, the assistant professors reported a median of one publication in a state journal and a median of two publications in national journals; in the current study, the assistant professors reported a median of two peer-reviewed journal articles. In both studies, the assistant professors had several years of full-time clinical experience, though again, these were defined differently in the two studies.

Criteria for Applying to and Accepting Faculty Positions

The assistant professors in this study rated the importance of 12 factors in deciding whether to apply for an advertised counselor education position and 15 factors in deciding whether to accept an offered position using a 5-point Likert scale. Overall, in rating these factors, these assistant professors tended to place relatively more importance on personal factors (e.g., geographic location, perceived work/life balance, perceived collegiality among faculty) than on more status-oriented variables (e.g., salary, opportunity to work with doctoral students, a program's reputation). In the study by Magnuson et al. (2001), participants

were presented with an open-ended question to identify factors that led them to accept their current positions. Though some of the factors listed by these participants informed the creation of the survey used in this study, it is not feasible to directly compare responses from the two studies because the factors identified by the participants in the Magnuson et al. study were not only less extensive than the factors queried in the current study, but in the Magnuson et al. study decisional factors were not rated or quantified in any manner.

Work Experiences and Occupational Satisfaction

The assistant professors who responded to this survey were generally satisfied with their current positions, and they reported comparable levels of satisfaction to that reported in a recent sample of associate and full professors of counselor education (Hatchett et al., 2022). Nonetheless, approximately one-fifth reported they were considering leaving the field of counselor education altogether. This area was not probed further through additional survey items, so it is unclear the reasons for this discontent. At the time of this survey, there were several news articles about faculty dissatisfaction with higher education (e.g., McClure & Fryar, 2022); however, it is unknown to what extent the factors and challenges described in these news articles were experienced by the assistant professors who responded to this study. Because so few studies (e.g., Coaston & Cook, 2018) have investigated dissatisfaction and turnover among counselor educators, future researchers might consider investigating why people leave or desire to leave faculty positions in counselor education.

Differences between Tenure-Track and Non-Tenure-Track Assistant Professors

For the most part, the tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors were similar on many of the variables examined in this study. However, there were several notable differences. First, tenure-track assistant professors were both younger and more likely to have attained their terminal degrees

from public universities compared to those not in tenure-track positions. The latter association makes sense because graduates of public universities were also more likely to be assistant professors at public universities, the institutions at which tenure-track positions were more common. Second, tenure-track assistant professors rated a position's emphasis on research as more important than non-tenure-track assistant professors, a difference consistent with the former's higher average number of peer-reviewed publications at the time of their applications and the higher research expectations commonly encountered with tenure-track positions (Hatchett, 2021; Vick et al., 2016). Assistant professors not on the tenure-track placed a greater importance on characteristics external to the faculty positions themselves, specifically opportunities for outside clinical work and a position's proximity to family or a significant other. Third, assistant professors on and off the tenure-track distributed their worktimes differently. As would be expected, counselor educators on the tenure-track reported spending a higher proportion of their worktime on research and a lower proportion on teaching. Somewhat less expected, those on the tenure track also reported spending a higher proportion of their worktime on service than non-tenure track professors. Though less valued than teaching and research, service is still commonly expected for assistant professors on the tenure-track (Hatchett, 2020, 2021). Additionally, those in non-tenure track positions may encounter minimal demands for service to the university. Finally, while assistant professors not on the tenure-track were not less satisfied with their current occupations than those on the tenure-track, those not on the tenure-track reported a greater intention to seek another faculty position within the next five years. Though not asked directly about this as part of the survey, this result may indicate that some of the assistant professors not currently on the tenure-track planned to pursue tenure-track positions in the future. On the other hand, those who accept non-tenure-track positions may be less interested in a long-term career as a counselor educator compared to those currently in tenure-earning positions. The reason for this discrepancy represents an opportunity for future research.

Limitations

Only about one in four of the assistant professors employed in CACREP-accredited counselor education provided usable survey data for this study. Though this response rate is typical for other recent surveys of counselor educators (Hatchett, 2020, 2021; Welfare et al., 2017), the non-respondents may have differed in important ways from those who completed the survey (Goyder, 2019). Furthermore, some of the statistically significant findings in this study might represent Type I errors. To maximize statistical power, the alpha level for each inferential test was set at .05, and there were not any adjustments made to the alpha level to compensate for multiple comparisons. Because of this, the statistically significant associations reported in this study should be considered tentative and re-evaluated in future research. Another limitation—and one discussed further in the implications section—was the decision to exclude other counselor educators from this study, such as full-time instructors, core faculty, clinical coordinators, and adjunct faculty.

Implications for Counselor Education and Future Research

To the extent the assistant professors in this sample are representative of the total population of assistant professors in counselor education programs, these results provide doctoral students and faculty with needed normative data about the application experiences and qualifications of those who have been successful in attaining assistant professor positions. In preparing for the counselor education market, doctoral students might compare themselves to these survey respondents in terms of their credentials, counseling experience, teaching experience, and scholarship. While such comparisons might be informative, the attainment of a position as a new assistant professor does not automatically result from meeting or even exceeding some set of normative benchmarks. The decision of a university to offer a candidate an assistant professor position is a complex one impacted by many additional variables, such as the

other candidates in the application pool, a candidate's area of specialization, and the on-campus interview (e.g., Vick et al., 2016).

In response to the increase in non-tenure-track counselor education positions (e.g., Isaacs & Sabella, 2013), one of the objectives of this study was to compare tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professors in terms of their application experiences, credentials, and work experiences. Though several statistically significant differences emerged, there are several unanswered questions about the career preferences and trajectories of counselor educators who are not in tenure-track positions. For example, what percentage of non-tenure-track assistant professors would prefer to have tenure-track positions? How do non-tenure-track counselor educators perceive their careers unfolding in higher education without the stability and status associated with a tenured faculty position? Questions of this nature might better be pursued using qualitative research designs.

Another important population—and one excluded from the current study—are those program graduates who tried and failed to attain assistant positions in counselor education programs. Some of these individuals might currently have full-time faculty positions with other professional titles, such as instructor or core faculty. On the other hand, there may also be graduates of doctoral programs who have been unsuccessful in attaining any type of full-time faculty position. What might explain their difficulties in attaining full-time faculty positions? To what extent are they too selective in applying to or accepting faculty positions? Are their credentials and qualifications not competitive enough for the current market? These and many other questions might be pursued through both quantitative and qualitative research designs.

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, one of the primary purposes of doctoral-level training in the field of counseling is to prepare program graduates to become counselor educators (CACREP, 2024; Snow & Field, 2020). This article provided some needed research on the application experiences and qualifications of those who recently

attained assistant professor positions in counselor education programs. However, research in the areas continues to be sparse. More research is needed on the opportunities available for faculty positions in counselor education programs and the barriers that doctoral program graduates might encounter in taking advantage of these opportunities.

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