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## The Experiences of Collegiality by Early-Career Counselor Educators

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## The Experiences of Collegiality by Early-Career Counselor Educators

### Abstract

It is essential to develop a work culture that supports faculty needs, be it professional for promotion and tenure, or personal. This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of collegiality by early-career counselor educator faculty members (CES) working in a CACREP institution. Relational support, expectations, administration, and doctoral experiences emerged as themes from these narratives. Implications for the field are discussed to address these experiences and provide recommendations to counselor education faculty and departments.

### Keywords

collegiality, phenomenology, faculty retention, counselor education

## **Introduction**

Collegiality is the foundation of professional work, job satisfaction, and a unifying cultural value in higher education (Cipriano & Buller, 2012; Haviland et al., 2017; Holmes et al., 2016). *Collegiality* is theoretically defined as “prosocial, supportive, and respectful behavior that promotes collective identity and goals” (Alleman et al., 2017, p. 21). It is also respectfully sharing ideas, loyalty to the department’s shared purpose, and openness to healthy debate and disagreement (Cipriano, 2011). Specific factors, such as a positive work environment, collaboration, mentorship, and diversity and inclusivity, impact the level of collegiality (Alleman & Haviland, 2017; Cipriano, 2011). Early-career faculty members in counselor education (CES) are in the position to seek mentorship and positive collegial relationships in their efforts to fulfill their academic obligations (Hill, 2004). In addition, faculty retention, tenure, and promotion (RTP) may require standards that a candidate demonstrate collegial behavior and “institutional citizenship” within their department and college, which has been deemed legitimate based on several court rulings (Cipriano & Buller, 2012, p. 1). This phenomenological qualitative research study examined the experiences of collegiality by early-career CES.

## **Literature Review**

Existing literature supports collegial relationships as influential to workplace satisfaction and success on and off the tenure track (Hill, 2004; Johnson, 2020; Olsen, 1993; Ponjuan et al., 2011). Rice et al. (2000) found that pre-tenured faculty described their work-life as isolating and competitive and that the lack of a sense of community with peers was a primary concern to job satisfaction. For faculty as well as the department to thrive, all must be committed to the wellness of the institution and intentional about sharing the workload and creating a collaborative, supportive workplace where all contributions are valued (Cipriano & Buller, 2012; Gappa et al.,

2007). Through lack of collegiality, faculty can damage both morale and effectiveness of a unit and institution (Cipriano, 2011; Cipriano, 2012; McElveen et al., 2006).

Cipriano (2011) described how the incivility of noncollegial faculty members has the potential to wreak havoc on a department. The ensuing toxicity within the work environment can lead to faculty disengagement, malicious behavior amongst colleagues, and challenges with student retention (Johnson, 2020). Some forms of conflict among faculty are inevitable; it is recognized that some departmental debate helps to drive faculty toward accountability and best practices (McElveen et al., 2006). Nevertheless, civility is still possible, as passionate scholarship and the exchange of differing ideas can be done in the spirit of collaboration and with overlapping goals in mind for the individual, department, and field (Cipriano, 2011; McElveen et al., 2006.) When faculty maintain a team-oriented spirit, professionalism, respect, and appreciation for one another's contributions, a collegial climate emanates (Alleman & Haviland, 2017; Cipriano, 2011). In this setting, individuals feel safe to express their ideas and diverse perspectives and engage in constructive arguments without the fear of retaliation.

Institutions invest significant resources into the search for hiring new faculty and may benefit from prioritizing the retention of these talented professionals (Reevy & Deason, 2014). Commonly cited factors influencing faculty morale include salary, leadership, faculty support, geographic location, and funding sources (Ambrose et al., 2005; Gappa et al., 2005; Olsen, 1993). In addition, with the process of RTP, there is much pressure to produce ambitious and novel work while remaining student-centered early on in a CES's academic career (Olsen & Crawford, 1998). In the absence of collegiality, these factors may breed insecurity, frustration, and unease about a CES's standing in their department. Collegial relationships can define a CES's perception of their work climate, productivity levels, job satisfaction, the goodness of fit in academia, and the

institution's overall well-being (Hall, 2004; Ponjuan et al., 2011; Sorcinelli, 1994). This article highlights the importance of understanding faculty perceptions of collegiality and how these perceptions affect faculty retention and professional performance. Several issues appear to contribute to these experiences of collegiality among CES.

### **Diversity in Academia**

While women and faculty of color have diversified academia, their support needs differ from their white male peers and they express disproportionate levels of dissatisfaction with their workplace (Gappa et al., 2005; Rideau, 2019). The diversity of faculty and student body, geographical location, the prestige of the department, a welcoming work environment, and the institution's mission were all identified as significant in the recruitment and retention of faculty of color (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). Even though there has been a rise in racially and ethnically diverse CES in CACREP-accredited programs within five years, there remains a gap in the representation of CES of color in correlation to the societal population (Oller et al., 2021). Further, the criteria of demonstrating congeniality appeared to significantly influence Black faculty earning tenure compared to scholarly work or service (Arnold et al., 2016). Validation and acceptance appear to be significant components to the collegiality of diverse individuals in academia (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004), while invalidation of one's work, microaggressions, and lack of belonging may lead to low retention of minoritized faculty (Rideau, 2019), and specifically CES (Pérez & Carney, 2018).

### **Career Stage and Workloads**

Research contends that pre-tenure and promoted faculty face considerable challenges in understanding multiple work roles and conflicting faculty workloads (Gappa et al., 2005; Ponjuan et al., 2011). Pre-tenured faculty report challenges in developing collegial relationships due to time

constraints, multiple pressures, role overload, poorly defined work boundaries, and work demands (Olsen, 1993). Role clarity and the actual time to have collegial interactions can help to increase job satisfaction. Researchers support the notion that senior members play a significant role in helping new members feel liked and trusted by the institution (Bauer et al., 2007). However, depending on the discipline, resources and time to complete a faculty member's workload may be scarce, increasing departmental tensions. Increased pressure related to fiscal constraints and meeting the wide range of educational needs of an increasingly diverse student body all impact the ability of faculty to engage in collegial interactions (Gappa et al., 2005).

### **Dispositions and Mentoring**

Brown-Rice and Furr (2015) identified problematic behaviors faculty participants reported observing in their colleagues. Such behaviors included difficulty regulating emotions, lack of professionalism, unethical decision-making, and concerns with mental health. Additionally, a study by Johnson (2020) focused on the influence gender, race, and academic rank have on faculty bullying, specifically in counselor education. It is essential to hold colleagues accountable to help ensure that students or staff are not harmed by the faculty member's competency or personal problems (Brown-Rice & Furr, 2015). Incivility is a dynamic that may be present in departments due to discrepancies in treatment from the administration, inconsistent and opaque RTP processes, or attitudes from senior faculty on the validity of the junior faculty area of expertise (Ambrose et al., 2005).

Mentorship, on the other hand, may positively impact the experience of collegiality. Formal and informal mentorship can be modeled or received during doctoral programs or when newly hired as CES faculty. Early-career faculty members have indicated a desire to receive structured mentoring, collegiality, feedback, and encouragement, emphasizing the imperative link between

mentorship and collegiality (Waalkes et al., 2021). While it is noted that the role of mentorship is paramount in the development of early-career faculty members, it is also noted that “compared to mentoring research in other fields, a consensus on the definition, function, or preferred approach to mentorship does not exist in counselor education” (Oller, 2021, p. 133). This is surprising since mentorship is critical for faculty success in navigating the unwritten and subtle rules of RTP and guiding the department climate.

Mentorship by a senior faculty member is a leading factor for professional advancement among female faculty and faculty of color (Ponjuan et al., 2011). Career and department political mentoring appear to be a consistent desire within departments as it increases transparency to promote feelings of support and belonging (Ambrose et al., 2005; Olsen, 1993). This process involves serving as a role model, socializing outside of solely professional contexts, and providing acceptance and nonjudgmental support when mistakes are made (Borders et al., 2011). Senior faculty maintaining a supportive stance can mitigate junior faculty’s fear of being perceived as incompetent, leading to insightful conversations about research, regular collaborations, and increased productivity (Borders et al., 2019; Olsen, 1993). Interest in a faculty member’s work life may also be an essential indicator of collegiality, boosting faculty empowerment and confidence to pursue their scholarly goals (Ambrose et al., 2005). Finally, social involvement, an “extensive willingness to know and to be known,” is a central component of collegiality (Alleman & Haviland, 2017, p. 532). Research shows that, conversely, ineffective and unresponsive mentoring leads to feelings of discouragement and a significant reduction in research confidence, interest, and self-efficacy (Borders et al., 2019). The authors of this article believe that understanding how specific collegial issues affect occupational satisfaction is a critical step in addressing faculty morale problems and establishing systems supportive of early-career CES.

## **Method**

A transcendental phenomenological research study was conducted to understand the essence of the participants' lived experiences of collegiality. This methodology seeks to describe the participants' experiences to understand the commonality of a lived experience within CES and better understand this phenomenon instead of interpreting the lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). Therefore, the guiding research question for this study was: What is the meaning of the lived experiences of collegiality by early-career CES?

### **Researcher Team**

The research team included two faculty members (first and second authors) employed as an Assistant Clinical Professor, a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor, and a doctoral student (third author) in counselor education. The first and second authors identify as women of color, and the third author White female. The research team was affiliated with a Research 1 CACREP-Accredited institution at the time of data collection and analysis. The authors employed epoche by engaging in bracketing to explore their researcher positionality and potential biases that could impact data analysis and conclusions (Hays & Singh, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). To maintain and adhere to reflexivity, the researchers engaged in frequent dialogue throughout the research process as a form of bracketing to ensure their biases were not impacting the participants' voices (Hays & Singh, 2011).

### **Participant Sampling and Recruitment**

Upon obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the authors recruited participants through purposive criterion sampling via emailing CES employed at CACREP accredited institutions. These email addresses came from researching current junior faculty at institutions listed on CACREP's directory. The selection criteria for participants were as follows:

(a) full-time early-career CES (defined as being pre-tenured/pre-promoted faculty status during the time of the interviews), (b) employed at a CACREP-accredited institution, (c) willing to commit to one recorded interview, and (d) 19 years or older. Pre-tenured/pre-promoted faculty rank was selected as a criterion of this study as the faculty development literature supports that the first three years of appointment entail the most socialization and difficulty that can impact a career (Olsen, 1993). The researchers elected to expand the criteria instead of focusing only on the first three years of appointment due to pre-tenured/pre-promoted faculty being recognized as early career. Sorcinelli (1994) discussed new faculty as a term identified as “faculty who have just received their PhD, faculty new to campus but with experience in other institutions, individuals making a career change to academe” which further justifies this criteria definition (p. 474). A \$20 Amazon e-giftcard provided after the interview was utilized as a recruitment incentive. Participants for the study included eight CES who identified as early-career (see Table 1). The number of participants for this study was determined to be sufficient based on Polkinghorne’s (1989) recommendation of a phenomenological sample size including five to 25 participants and saturation based on the responses collected. Additional participants were not sought due to saturation emerging during the data analysis process, which indicated further information collected would not provide new findings, and the sample was sufficient given the research design and overall goal for the study.

Table 1

*Participants Demographics*

Pseudonym	Gender identity	Race/ Ethnicity	Type of institution	Academic rank	Yrs in profession
Allison	F	White/ Caucasian	Research/ Brick and Mortar	Assistant -TT	4-6
Angela	F	Black/ African American	Teaching/ Brick and Mortar	Assistant -TT	<1
Olivia	F	White/ Caucasian	Teaching/ Brick and Mortar	Assistant -TT	1-3
Autumn	F	White/ Caucasian	Teaching/ Brick and Mortar	Assistant (not a tenure-granting institution)	1-3
Norman	M	Pacific Islander/ Asian American	Brick and Mortar	Assistant -TT	1-3
Lulu	F	White/ Caucasian	Private/ Brick and Mortar	Assistant -TT	4-6
Simon	M	White/ Caucasian	Teaching/ Brick and Mortar	Assistant -TT	1-3
Lacy Em	F	White/ Caucasian	Online	Assistant- NTT	4-6

Participants ranged from 31-53 years of age ( $M= 42$ ). Two participants identified as working in the North Atlantic Region Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, one participant working in the Rocky Mountain Association for Counselor Education and Supervision region, four participants working in the Southern Association for Counselor Education region, and one working in the Western Association for Counselor Education and Supervision region. While the data pool specialty was assorted with marriage and family therapy, clinical rehabilitation counseling, and school counseling, the most common specialty was Clinical Mental Health Counseling ( $n=6$ ). Some demographic information is provided through aggregate data to maintain participant anonymity.

**Semi-Structured Interview**

The interview protocol aligned with transcendental phenomenology, which included open-ended questions and involved in-depth narratives of participants to voice and understand their experiences (Hays & Singh, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). This qualitative approach examined the meaning of collegial relationships for faculty, the context within which participants work, how it influences their relationship-building and job satisfaction, and spontaneous data that emerged from the open-ended interviews. The interview protocol was developed based on the authors' review of the literature and overarching research question (i.e., what is the meaning of the lived experience of collegiality by junior faculty in CACREP institutions?), and alignment with the phenomenological framework for the development of questions (Moustakas, 1994). The second author completed a pilot interview with a colleague outside the research team at another Research 1 institution who has extensive experience as a qualitative researcher to ensure the clarity and appropriateness of questions. The questions were discussed and deemed to be appropriate regarding phenomenology framework since they adhered to the use of open-ended questions to gain insight into these experiences and voices of the participants. Sample interview protocol questions included: (a) tell me about how you define collegiality based on your experiences in your role as an early-career faculty member?, (b) what experiences of collegiality stand out to you?, and (c) based on your experiences, how do you perceive the climate in your work setting?.

After completing the informed consent, a research team member scheduled an audio-recorded semi-structured interview. Interviews were conducted by one member of the research team and transcribed by another member. The total time commitment was approximately one hour for the interview and additional time pending member checks. Each participant's narrative was collected, a pseudonym selected, and the results were analyzed by the first and second author for

themes of their lived experience. All aspects of the data collection and transmission process were protected by secure technology.

### **Data Analysis**

The transcendental research process guided the data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Analysis included reviewing all data points collected during the data collection process to identify the textural and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The first and second authors bracketed their assumptions before and during data analysis by discussing their assumptions and biases based on their experiences as CES in a CACREP accredited institution (Hays & Singh, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). This was done to ensure that the voices and stories of the participants were in the forefront instead of the experiences of the researchers.

The first three authors interviewed participants and transcribed the interviews verbatim. To eliminate potential bias, each author transcribed an interview that they did not conduct to understand the participants' experiences and identify any possible bias of the researcher who interviewed the participant. The research team followed Moustakas' steps for data analysis, which involved horizontalization, forming clusters of meaning, developing structural and textural descriptions as themes and subthemes, and highlighting the essence of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The first and second authors individually hand-coded the transcripts and met weekly to compare codes and determine consensus. During this process and after consensus, the codebook was developed, which illuminated the textural and structural descriptions of the essence of collegiality experienced by the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Trustworthiness**

Several trustworthiness strategies were used to minimize biases. First, the second author pilot tested the interview protocol to ensure the questions asked met the study's aims. Second, the

first and second authors met weekly for fifteen weeks to discuss their impressions, feelings, knowledge about collegiality, and potential biases to ensure they were not influencing the data analysis process and to remain open to new ideas. Third, throughout the meetings, the first and second authors engaged in reflexive journaling to bracket their assumptions and write thick descriptions of the participants' lived experiences (Hays & Singh, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Fourth, during data analysis, the first and second authors did not identify a theme unless it occurred on at least six separate occasions across interviews to be certain themes were grounded in data (Creswell, 2014). Fifth, while member checking occurred during all interviews, the second author completed member checking post-interview by providing the transcripts to the participants. In turn, none of the participants requested changes to the transcripts. Sixth, the third author served as the auditor who cross-checked for accuracy and helped increase the likelihood of confirmability since she did not participate in the data analysis phase. The third author was selected as the auditor to increase credibility; this author had completed two qualitative courses and had experience conducting qualitative research. As a student, she would also be able to examine the data through an unbiased lens due to not having faculty experience. Finally, the research team engaged in continuous discussions about the participants' stories to describe the rich meaning and the essence of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). These steps align with Lincoln and Guba's (1984) gold standard of trustworthiness due to the researchers' prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks during the data collection and providing transcripts for review, maintaining an audit trail, and reflexive journaling. Finally, the fourth author assisted with the manuscript development.

## **Findings**

Four overarching themes and six subthemes emerged that captured the essence of early-career CES' experiences of collegiality. The overarching themes included: (a) relational support, (b) expectations (subthemes: doctoral experiences; interview process), (c) administration (subthemes: tenure and promotion process; faculty retention), and (d) collegiality types (subthemes: active collegiality; passive collegiality). Again, pseudonyms were selected to conceal participants' identities.

### **Theme 1: Relational Support**

Participants shared their experiences of relational support through nurturance and guidance as well as vulnerability and sincerity. The influence of relational support voiced by the participants indicated its impact on creating a sense of belonging and trust within the department. Nurturance and guidance encompass the sense of belonging felt by the participants. Furthermore, senior faculty can set the tone of support towards CES by extending a welcoming space. Simon described this as, "Some of it comes from the feeling that the department wants me to be there. Right? The feeling that my success is something they want." Olivia stated, "The word "partnership" comes up and as cliché as it may sound, being a part of a true team, a synergistic team." These examples demonstrate an invested interest colleagues have in one another.

Collegiality was seen as an intentional act to create a welcoming and supportive environment. Olivia highlighted this by stating:

It's being welcomed, included, like an intentional inclusion, an intentional reaching out to ensure that I felt welcomed and valued and that my voice has been valued, and my experiences, opinions, and suggestions has been valued and will continue to be valued.

She went on further to describe how faculty can create a nurturing environment, "Having faculty within the program, or even within the department coming up to me to make sure I'm doing okay

and offering their own experiences of being first-time faculty members.” Based on these experiences, having an environment that fostered nurturing relationships further strengthened a sense and culture of collegiality.

The participants illuminated a sense of vulnerability and sincerity in their experiences with collegiality. It was evident that trust was a vital component to being vulnerable and sincere when building collegial relationships. The participants echoed that being open with one another was based on the foundation of trust. Olivia described this as “...the authenticity and relationships... people not afraid to show their vulnerabilities, because that helps me to show mine...” Autumn mentioned, “I do think part of it is trust. I think trusting one another in ways of transparency or that –this person is going to have my back should I need it.” Allison recognized support as an essential characteristic of collegiality, “Support means a lot... open mind... open hands in a way so you can come to me and talk to me.” It appeared that once trust was established, colleagues had the best interest of each other in mind. For example, Olivia stated:

They’re coming to me with good intentions. So yes. It’s less load bearing, you know when the tough stuff happens or when I don’t get a conference, or if I get rejected, if one of my proposals gets rejected, or if a manuscript gets rejected, some of those kinds of defeating moments.

Autumn described collegiality as also encompassing emotional safety:

I can come to work and have a bad day and be, “listen guys, just in a mood today, so probably not the best day to bring anything to me (chuckle)”, and they’ll be like, “Door closed today - hey, okay, you know.”

## **Theme 2: Expectations**

Each participant shared stories relating to their experiences during doctoral programs or the interview process that set their expectations of collegiality. These experiences set the stage for their attitude and definition of what collegiality is. It is noteworthy that faculty and departments set the tone of how collegiality is operationalized based on the presentation of their behaviors when serving as either educators to their students or during faculty interviews.

### ***Doctoral Experiences***

The participants' experiences as doctoral students formed their ideas of collegiality. Norman discussed how doctoral school provided him with an understanding of what type of colleague he would like to emulate. He explained, "It taught me so much about who really was there in terms of for other people, and it gave me some really good models of what I didn't want to be." Autumn recalled discussions during her doctoral program which played a role in her collegiality development, "There was definitely modeling of mentoring relationships and collegial relationships, and I can remember even having in one of our courses a discussion on collegiality and what it means to be collegial."

### ***Interview Process***

The participants discussed their expectations of collegiality based on their experiences while job interviewing. Norman shared, "Through the interview process, through my interactions with them, and I will say -I have very positive interactions with my institution, I really felt like it was going to be home." This parallels evidence that faculty members' attitudes towards applicants have been a factor in accepting a faculty position (Magnuson et al., 2001). Lacey Em stated, "I really thought there would be collegial and more communication...". Additionally, participants discussed how their expectations based on the interview process did not match their expectations once they started in their faculty role. Norman explained:

It was almost until - not until I spent a full year at the institution that I really figured out...  
hmm... here are the things that we really need to work on in this department. Here are the  
gaps that continue to exist.

Lacey Em described her expectation based the interview process by stating:

I thought it would be a little more, set up for distance faculty because there are more than  
one of me. But I don't think they were as prepared for distance faculty as they probably  
should have been.

### **Theme 3: Administration**

Administration and leadership appeared to set the tone of collegiality, as the atmosphere  
and environment impacted the department's climate. Norman indicated, "The climate, and I will  
say for me what actually matters a lot is the leadership because they model that entire climate.  
They set the boundaries for that climate." Olivia indicated, "I do think that's probably what bleeds  
into collegiality or what influences collegiality from a negative perspective, would be some of the  
administrative changes and administrative chaos that trickles down." Additionally, Norman  
recounted how the administration could influence the departmental dynamics:

...it's based on loyalties. Deference. So, I think there's been sort of an in-group and out-  
group. And the in-group is everybody who aligns with the leadership in our department,  
especially our department chair and anybody who offers contrasting perspectives,  
definitions, they're usually sort of isolated.

### ***Tenure and Promotion Process***

More senior colleagues' collegiality influenced the participants' clarity and understanding  
of the RTP process. Some participants voiced that the process had been clear and informative by  
the administration, whereas others indicated the opposite. Lulu shared, "The uncertainty. The lack

of clarity... that probably contributes to some of our conflict. And lack of collegiality.” She further expanded by stating:

Because if I’m getting a publication and I don’t know if my colleagues are working towards stuff, then that becomes threatening, right? Because then she has that for her tenure and promotion, then I’d better get one because inevitably, when they see our portfolios, they will look to see if we’re doing comparable stuff.

Angela experienced the same at her institution,

My colleagues haven’t said anything to me about it. Like, the university hasn’t talked to me about it; I have to go out of my way to ask people what tenure looks like, my colleagues say they want me to stay here they want me to be here, but nobody talks to me about what the tenure process looks like from my university.

Other participants experienced opposite preparation and receipt of resources concerning tenure and promotion. Allison stated,

They gave me so much...and they gave me access to some resources, gave me good advice, and this program, mentoring program, they work in seminars, workshops. So, people shared with me their tenure folders; basically, they gave me access to their tenure files, all of them.

Olivia described her experience where colleagues demonstrated support by sharing their materials:

I’ve had other faculty members say ‘I’ll just show you mine. I’ll give you mine, so you don’t have to worry too much about formatting.’

Simon explained his experience as:

Can I look through your binder? And was given like, ‘yeah here’s a copy of it,’ like completely, so that’s where I feel like the support is like it’s – ‘yeah let me show you what

I did, no qualms about like opening up my binder for you, so you have some more clarity and don't have to make the same mistakes that I did.'

### ***Faculty Retention***

Based on the participants' experiences, the essence of collegiality influenced faculty retention. Lacey Em described, "When people are being more collegial, it makes for a more warm, caring, supportive, positive environment. It makes people want to stay in their position." Angela reiterated this, "oh yes, collegiality keeps me here." While supportive experiences influenced participants' desire to remain at their institutions, others collegial factors impacted retention. Angela voiced her experience of being marginalized by students and the faculty's response to it:

But it definitely impacts you, especially after a hard process and I go, and I tell them, "This was really hard, and I want help with your teaching style to make this a little bit different. How can I connect with the students?" and then when they kind of dismiss that it happened, that makes it worse so then you're like well if I was teaching in [other state] I know I would find people who would feel what I'm feeling or whatever and wouldn't dismiss me, so it makes you feel like you don't want to be where you are.

Additionally, she shared mixed messages from faculty to convey their desire for her to stay. She expressed her uncertainty, "So there's this weird balance of 'we hired you and we want you to stay' and so sometimes it might not always feel authentic for sure as an African American woman in [city] of all places." Regarding retention, Lulu stated, "oh yeah, I don't want to remain. I go back and forth".

### **Theme 4: Collegiality Types**

Two types of collegiality identified include active collegiality and passive collegiality. Based on the participants' narratives, it was evident that intentional, effective acts of collegiality

and ineffective acts of collegiality were experienced by early-career CES. While collegiality can be fostered within departments, the types of collegiality environments can vary. Norman highlighted these subthemes:

There is active collegiality and passive collegiality, and what I mean by active collegiality is that there are people who actually are empathic, who get it, and who reach out. The passive collegiality is, it's still sort of emits this whole idea that "Oh well... I'm here for you on paper, but I'm not really here for you."

### ***Active Collegiality***

Active collegiality was recognized as intentional and proactive approaches to supporting one another. It indicated a desire to make others feel welcomed and valued. Norman described:

I will say effective collegiality for me is that it starts with us, and what I mean by that is that we recognize what we can do as individuals, how we can be better colleagues, and that we can and should look out for each other.

Lacey Em stated, "It's about working together to build each other up and build the program up in order to maintain a positive program environment." Simon shared, "It's like just comradery and support within the department is really how I'm defining it in kind of the pre-tenure years." Lulu described, "It also just seems to be kind and being respectful and both types of words; I don't think you have to be best friends or anything, but you treat one another with respect." Olivia expands on this:

I think there was a mentality of 'hey, we're in this together,' especially within our program. Faculty within our program very much have each other's back. There's some serious support there, and I was immediately welcomed into that so even though there might be eternal chaos at the administrative level that trickles down, it didn't necessarily influence

us in any extraordinary way because we had each other's backs and we did what we did, and we do what we do, and we do it well.

Allison described, "Words of encouragement. Ideas. Help...constructive feedback when you get not only you did it wrong, but they tell you what you can improve."

### ***Passive Collegiality***

Passive collegiality was described as isolating and difficult. Lulu shared, "They don't want to be around me, I don't want to be around them." She went on, "We all feel this way and so it's just really like I really think being a faculty job can be very isolating." Angela echoed Lulu's sentiment, "It's just hard, and it feels isolating, and it feels like I don't get support and then I won't rank and then what am I doing for the profession?" Lacey Em paralleled this describing:

I mean, no one is really like cutthroat, or we are not like...tearing each down or anything like that. But no one really works together or talks to each other, and... sometimes, I mean, you kind of do feel like you are by yourself in your own little island.

Through faculty collegiality, collaboration and learning can work against isolation (Hoerr, 2015). Lulu's experience depicted an environment of jealousy based on achievements, "I find colleagues to sometimes derail you, there's professional jealousy because you perhaps get a publication, and they don't." This parallels literature that collegiality in faculty may decline over time, partially weathered through competition (Olsen, 1993). The results and narratives from this study inform the counselor education profession with future research recommendations and implications for practice.

## **Discussion**

The literature suggests that a lack of collegial support is the most unexpected challenge junior CES contend with (Hill, 2004). These findings inform departments about the experiences

and phenomena of collegiality to initiate dialogue supportive of fostering early-career faculty belonging. The participants' lived experiences aligned with research conducted by Watanabe and Falci (2017), who discussed that faculty opening to share are more likely to feel acceptance and form meaningful work friendships and mentoring relationships. This may be crucial to developing positive perceptions of the work climate and department belonging. Other benefits of mentoring colleagues include increased loyalty of all faculty, openness to change, department cohesion and consistency, generating new ideas and department processes, mentoring of novice faculty members, group problem-solving and morale-boosting team effort, anticipatory planning, productivity, and job satisfaction (Greggs-McQuilkin, 2004).

In a study by Barnes et al. (1998), the two most important predictors of faculty desire to leave academia were frustration due to time commitments and a lack of sense of community at their institution. This sentiment also emerged in the participants' experiences. Peer collaboration and transparency appear to help lessen feelings of isolation and increased the meaningfulness of faculty duties. Based on the participants' narratives, the administration directly impacts collegiality. In addition, US courts have repeatedly confirmed the use of collegiality as a factor in administration making decisions regarding faculty RTP (Cipriano & Buller, 2012). Interventions directed to increase collegiality are most likely to be successful at the institutional level, as the institution controls access to resources that are crucial for job satisfaction (e.g., financial stability, job security, respect, purpose) (Reevy & Deason, 2014).

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The findings from this study provide implications for CES and other faculty as they highlight the importance of proactive efforts to create a collegial environment for junior faculty. The authors discuss recommendations on a macro to a micro level, as collegiality is a phenomenon

with several factors. Hill (2004) describes, “well counselor educators may be more likely to produce well counselors who are more likely to produce well clients” (p. 136). On a micro level, dispositional mindfulness has been found to help cultivate an increased quality of life in work and reduce burnout (Hawkes & Neal, 2020). Being attentive and aware at any given moment, particularly during work tension and friction, with a stance of acceptance and non-judgment, can increase job satisfaction, engagement in work and decrease emotional and physical exhaustion associated with work responsibilities (Hawkes & Neal, 2020). These specific examples underscore the importance of wellness, mindfulness in cultivating an increased quality of life to reduce burnout, and an environment of acceptance and non-judgement to foster collegiality.

To cultivate collegiality CES must be intentional in how they support each other through overt and tangible actions to demonstrate appreciation and value of each other’s talent, efforts, and wellness. For example, building comradery may look like support through mentoring CES about upcoming conference proposal and grant deadlines, initiating collaboration on projects, connecting junior faculty to colleagues from different institutions that align in research scope, nominating new faculty for awards or presentation opportunities, engaging in pleasurable activities together outside of the office, being vulnerable about the difficult aspects of the faculty role, attending conferences and celebrating accomplishments together, and respecting each other’s time boundaries. These are just a few opportunities to demonstrate validation, acceptance, and a ‘looking out for each other.’

On a macro level, the administration can cultivate collegiality by having regular communication with faculty that all contributions are valuable despite ranking or appointment type (Haviland et al., 2017), and provide “opportunities for faculty members to feel a part of a mutually respectful community of colleagues” (Gappa et al., 2005, p. 7). Using faculty meetings to enrich congeniality, growth, and learning versus providing information more suitable for emails can be

powerful in building collegiality (Hoerr, 2015). The Dialogues process can also be a valuable tool for intentional faculty engagement and promotion of collegiality (see Holmes et al., 2016). In addition, the authors recommend that administrators utilize a standard instrument to evaluate the presence or absence of collegiality during any type of review, free from judgment based on subjective biases. An instrument has been developed based on a panel of administrative professionals called the Collegiality Assessment Matrix (CAM) (Cipriano & Buller, 2012). This, along with a modified version, the Self-Assessment Matrix (S-AM), could be incorporated into annual faculty evaluations to assess observable behaviors of collegiality and provide specific guidance for improvement (Cipriano & Buller, 2012). Essentially, institutional investment in new faculty should not discontinue after the hiring and onboarding process is complete. By incorporating these examples, junior faculty are provided opportunities to gain a sense of belonging and collegiality.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

There were limitations to this study that warrant consideration. First, although participants were all full-time early-career faculty, there were differences in how their department and work were divided and whether tenure was offered at their institution. Some of these dissimilarities could account for differences in their shared experiences. As well, greater diversity in the sample may yield different data on academics' collegial experiences, particularly how underrepresented groups, various social and geographic locations, and institution ranking and research requirements may play a factor in work supports, comradery, and RTP.

Future researchers may benefit from investigating specific factors that promote collegiality and job satisfaction across academic ranks. In addition, more research that centers on the expectations of doctoral students becoming faculty and mentorship as a necessity for tenure and

promotion is recommended. Lastly, the authors do not recommend ‘niceness’ to be the ultimate answer to difficulties with collegiality; historically, this has been exploited by senior faculty and administration, specifically to faculty of color (Arnold et al., 2016). There is a pressing need for more extensive and systematic examination of low feelings of collegiality on CES; the cost of low occupational satisfaction and morale for current and future counseling students and the public appears too high to risk.

### **Conclusion**

Collegiality is an integral factor contributing to early-career CES’ job satisfaction and the retention of faculty. Relational support, expectations set during doctoral programs or interview processes, attitudes of administration and leadership, and transparency about the RTP process all appear to influence faculty experiences of collegiality. Initially, having graduate programs expose students to realistic expectations of being faculty can help prepare for the academic culture and socialization needed to establish collegial support networks (Hill, 2004; Olsen & Crawford, 1998). Additionally, the instruction, modeling, and camaraderie inherent in positive mentorship can assist new faculty in managing friction in collaborative environments professionally. Having junior faculty members assigned to mentors based on an overlap of interests, personality, or training can increase collegiality and the level of productivity that leads to RTP. On an administrative level, implementing systems supportive of collegiality as well as standards of conduct related to professional relationships may help foster a culture of collaboration and cooperation. Further understanding and attention to these issues in academia is essential to facilitate both sustainable, productive careers for new CES as well as departmental retention of valuable faculty.

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