

Wellbeing and the SACE Model of Mentoring

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Interest in wellbeing is growing, but it needs to be clearly connected to mentoring, which has a significant wellbeing element (psychosocial function). Career support, measured by metrics of success, is also crucial. The need to incorporate wellbeing into mentoring initiatives has been recognized for achieving mentoring goals that benefit students, faculty, and leaders. Wellbeing, mentoring, and policy can be imagined as an interconnected system for promoting fulfillment. This conceptual work presents a blueprint for integrating wellbeing into mentoring practices in education. The original mentoring model features four components: support, accessibility, collaboration, and equity (SACE). SACE was derived from school/district fieldwork and analysis of mentoring research. This framework is conducive for program, leadership, and relational development and policymaking. A goal is to reimagine mentoring using SACE as a metric to gauge equity toward organizational effectiveness and health. When equity forms a key component in a wellbeing-supported mentoring initiative, manifold benefits can occur.

Keywords: Healthy community, SACE model of mentoring, theory generation, wellbeing

Introduction

This article describes theory generation around the SACE Model of Mentoring, which I present in service of healthy communities. Support, accessibility, collaboration, and equity (SACE), as will be seen, are essential components of this original framework (Mullen, 2025a, 2025b). A lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic is that wellbeing cannot be ignored and thus needs to be better understood.

My purpose is to theorize the important role of wellbeing in mentoring, regardless of context or location of mentoring programs, research, projects, events, or experiences. Although I reference particular contexts spanning higher education and schools in my review of literature, my focus is not on a single setting. Instead, I am keen to enlarge the scope and power of wellbeing for supporting professionals and students in public education. In the mix, mentoring that accounts for such trends as the rise in diverse student populations and first-generation women of color is warranted, but the applicator of my theorizing is the interested reader.

I argue that wellbeing should be embedded in the theory, research, and practice of mentorship and that it is a crucial feature of future research, policy, and practice (Adair & Reames, 2025; Hobson & Mullen, 2023; Kutsyruba & Godden, 2019a; Kutsyruba & Kochan, 2025a). To that end, I reveal possibilities for incorporating wellbeing into the SACE model. Moreover, I contribute to knowledge about mentoring for wellbeing in real-world settings, with emphasis

on building theory and applying tenets of wellbeing. I describe a worldview of wellbeing as quintessentially connected to support, accessibility, collaboration, and equity within the scope of mentoring. This vision enlivens workplace wellbeing and health from the vantage point of SACE, which encompasses equitable mentoring.

Herein, I present a blueprint for more effectively and intentionally integrating wellbeing into mentoring practices in different educational contexts. As background, SACE was derived from my fieldwork in various schools/divisions and analysis of research on mentoring (Mullen, 2025a, 2025b). With broad reach, this mentoring model was designed for program, leadership, and relational development in professional and academic settings and for policymaking. A goal is to reimagine mentoring using SACE to gauge equity and, hence, organizational effectiveness and community health. My supposition is that when wellbeing forms a key component in a mentoring initiative, manifold benefits can occur, such as: enhanced morale, improved performance, a sense of accomplishment, meaningful engagement, positive relationships, and increased productivity.

Literature Review

In this section, I first descriptively define mentoring and wellbeing. My explanation of the SACE model components follow the discussion of mentoring and wellbeing.

Mentoring

A developmental relationship, mentoring has been defined as a formal or informal process of professional development and learning (PDL) that is structured (arranged) or spontaneous, respectively (Hobson, 2021; Mullen, 2025a; Wheeler et al., 2024). Experienced and (relatively) inexperienced individuals work together in a relationship that provides career and psychosocial support and offers mutual benefits (Kram, 1983). Kram's mentoring theory elucidates four phases of the relationship: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. As the mentoring relationship matures, it builds capacity for people, programs, and organizations.

Mentors are a vital resource for classroom management, lesson planning, and social-emotional growth for students (Hobson, 2021). Beyond a "helping relationship," mentoring aims to improve organizations through teacher development and retention and student success (Maxwell et al., 2022). Refined understandings and definitions of mentoring/mentorship abound. For example, "collaborative mentorship" incorporates practices that support equity and cultural responsiveness in classrooms with diverse populations and promote engagement in "antiracist education" (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). "Comentoring" refers to empowering learning encounters aimed at transforming cultures and professions (Mullen et al., 2022). Mentorship can unfold in pairs or groups embarking on positive change relative to these nontraditional concepts and applications.

Formal mentoring is intentional and planned, and these organizational relationships are structured, managed, and sanctioned. Mentoring that occurs in this manner across a school district is systemwide. Schools interpret centralized policy to implement and deliver mentoring programming to meet organizational goals, such as employee retention (Mullen et al., 2022; Mullen, 2025a; Smithey & Evertson, 2003). Informal mentoring occurs spontaneously between parties and does not depend on organizational oversight or involvement (Wheeler et al., 2024).

Wellbeing

Wellbeing as a concept is not the exclusive domain of education, having just recently become associated with mentoring. Many disciplines are guided by considerations of wellbeing, including education, law, medicine, and psychology, wherein models of wellbeing serve as frameworks with widely differing emphases (e.g., social acceptance, personal growth, emotions, and interactions). Contributions to research on wellbeing in mentoring from educational leadership, my own social science field, are gradually appearing (e.g., Adair & Reames, 2025; Kutsyuruba & Godden, 2019a; Kutsyuruba

& Kochan, 2024, 2025a). Many definitions are associated with wellbeing. A pivotal notion in literature describes wellbeing as subjective and objective. Subjective wellbeing (SWB), a psychological construct, includes many aspects of context and feelings of wellbeing, happiness, and satisfaction. SWB has been referred to as "a highly subjective state, heavily influenced by contextual and societal variables" (Kutsyuruba & Kochan, 2025b, p. 4). Concerned with how people think, feel, and evaluate what happens to them, SWB is a measure of individuals' perceptions and feelings about their life and overall wellbeing relative to subjective experience. In Keyes's (2016) lexicon, happiness is synonymous with wellbeing, representing individuals' evaluations of the quality of their lives. Thirteen research-informed qualities of happiness (appearing on Keyes's Mental Health Continuum questionnaire) are "happy, purpose/interested in life, satisfied, social contribution, social integration, social growth, social acceptance, social coherence, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relationships, personal growth, and autonomy" (pp. 99–100). These characteristics of happiness simultaneously belong to wellbeing. Objective wellbeing (OWB), on the other hand, encompasses outside conditions that affect people's lives, such as environmental and physical health (Kutsyuruba & Kochan, 2025b; Maddux, 2018). As claimed by mentoring for wellbeing scholars (see Kutsyuruba & Kochan, 2025b), flourishing relies on SWB and OWB, implying that all mentoring relationships and communities can contribute to social wellbeing while nurturing psychological and emotional wellbeing.

Workplace wellbeing involves happiness, satisfaction, self-care, and compassion. Compassion, however, while closely associated with wellbeing, is not synonymous, as revealed by Boyatzis et al.'s (2013) definition of compassion as "an interpersonal process that involves noticing another person as being in need, [and] empathizing ... and acting to enhance [their] wellbeing in response to that need" (pp. 154–155). In coaching contexts, they wrote, compassion is invoked when change processes occur in trusting, safe spaces that direct PDL and desired behaviors. Wellbeing is built into the process of "compassion-based coaching," which presumably applies to mentoring. In an appreciative inquiry approach to "mentorship for flourishing" in Canada, Cherkowski and Walker (2019) unpacked "generative ways of noticing, nurturing, and sustaining the work of teaching and learning" with principals and teachers engaged in mentoring (p. 345). The researchers adopted a positive organizational view to emphasize vitality in school cultures and, specifically, "positive mentoring" through appreciative group conversations. "Noticing" is positioned as a frame of mind among other habits to be cultivated. Reflective of wellbeing

practice in this study, noticing overlaps with the compassion definition, suggesting ambiguity and complexity in distinguishing wellbeing from associated constructs.

Positivity, hope, and optimism are foundational to happiness, satisfaction, and compassion, based on a study of teacher psychology (PsyCap). Flanagan and Mullen (2024) found that mentorship, peer support, and leadership all influence beginning teacher PsyCap. Mentor and leader mindfulness also impacted mentee happiness levels, performance, and stress. The strength/health of novice teachers' PsyCap was attributed by participants to their workplace relationships with mentors, peers, and leaders. These career-switchers recommended that mentoring programs include a strong support network and trustworthy colleagues to help novices navigate teaching complexities and professional life. For this examination of novices' experience of mentoring, leadership, and adaptation, Flanagan and Mullen used the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007) with 34 career-switchers in Virginia, interviewing 18 of them.

As a term wellbeing has gained status in recent decades. Its underlying notion of striving for a good life and positive mental and physical health has origins in ancient philosophy and religion. In 1948, the World Health Organization's (2025) definition of wellbeing—"a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"—popularized the notion that wellbeing is multifaceted. Seligman (2011), a founder of positive psychology in the post-1960s, propelled interest in wellbeing, focusing on human factors like strength, resilience, contentment, self-fulfillment, and happiness. Study of wellbeing in positive psychology and organizational life spotlights vitality in human and organizational life (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Seligman, 2011). In their quantitative study, Schotanus-Dijkstra et al. (2016) declared, "Flourishing is the ultimate end-state in psychology and a key concept in ... positive psychology research" (p. 1351). Interestingly, the 1,962 "flourishers" among 5,303 adults in the Netherlands—takers of the Netherlands Mental Health Survey and Incidence Study—shared personality characteristics for psychological wellbeing: high conscientiousness (set challenging goals and have strong discipline), high extraversion, and low neuroticism. Adults in the flourishing group were younger, mainly female, and more educated than the non-flourishers (in contrast with another study's finding that male gender was significantly associated with flourishing). "Positive life-events" (e.g., a healthy relationship with a new partner) and "social support" as measures revealed a relationship with flourishing (but not physical health). Schotanus-Dijkstra et al. explained that little is known about positive

life events relative to wellbeing given that negative life events are studied more extensively, which suggests a direction for future research.

In 2014, wellbeing appeared in an argument countering high-stakes competitive testing within global nations that named wellbeing as a primary objective of education. Critics at educational organizations from different nations—among them Oliveira Andreotti (Canada), Stephen Ball (Great Britain), and Diane Ravitch (United States)—penned an open letter to the director of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. They relayed their concerns about the damage the Programme for International Student Assessment inflicts on public education and its destruction of the public good through the erosion of humanitarian values, such as safeguarding equitable opportunities for education and success. This is an excerpt from the letter: "Preparing [youth] for gainful employment is not the only, and not even the main, goal of public education, which has to prepare students for participation in democratic self-government, moral action and a life of personal development, growth, and wellbeing" (as cited in *The Guardian*, 2014; italics added).

More recently, a scholarly community of mentoring researchers (i.e., Kochan & Kutsyuruba, 2025a) espoused that mentoring is necessary for promoting and sustaining wellbeing in higher education settings. Interest in wellbeing is growing across educational contexts, but it is considered only loosely related to mentoring. Yet mentoring has a meaningful wellbeing element (psychosocial function) that involves emotional support, acceptance, role modeling, and belonging. Career support, measured by metrics of success (promotion, publication, graduation, retention, etc.), is also crucial. Kram's body of mentoring research (e.g., 1983) is a precursor to these ideas. Although wellbeing was not part of this work, it lends itself to this interpretation as well as application. One such illustration is seen in Adair and Reames's (2025) account of the psychosocial and career dimensions of their sustained mentoring relationship, which animates Kram's theory in a contemporary academic setting involving education leaders.

In research describing benefits of mentoring, mentees commonly report enhanced self-confidence in such areas as decision-making, which can promote autonomy and emotional regulation (e.g., Mullen, 2025a). Healthy mentoring relationships and communities represent a haven for enhancing PDL and wellbeing. In such spaces, the mentee is free to experiment with ideas and pedagogies, can develop in the present moment without judgement or "judgementoring" (Hobson, 2021), and is reassured by colleagues within a positive mentoring community (Hobson, 2021; Hobson & Mullen, 2023; Kutsyuruba & Godden, 2019a; Kutsyuruba & Kochan, 2025a; Mullen, 2025a).

With ties to workplace wellbeing, mentoring also helps mental health by supporting interpersonal connections and community, feeling listened to, instilling a sense of confidence and empowerment, and cultivating a sense of hope for the future (Hobson & Mullen, 2023). Reduction of anxiety, another aspect of mental health, is crucial in the current cultural and political moment. Employees in education remain highly susceptible to burnout and stress (Kun & Gadancz, 2022), and teachers have reported that decreased self-efficacy, resilience, and hope perpetuate turnover (Joo et al., 2015). Hence, emphasis on wellbeing in mentoring, especially for novice professionals and in academic environments such as graduate education, is terribly important. As the Mental Health Foundation (2024) acknowledged, “Work politics can be a real challenge when we have mental health problems. It can be helpful to find a mentor or a small group of trusted colleagues [to] discuss feelings about work” (p. 20).

Wellbeing—feeling accepted and supported, having access to rewarding opportunities, and being treated fairly—overlaps with effective and equitable mentoring. Incorporating wellbeing into mentoring initiatives to propel human flourishing has been recognized in recent times (Adair & Reames, 2025; Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Hobson & Mullen, 2023; Kutsyruba & Godden, 2019a; Kutsyruba & Kochan, 2025a). An emphasis on wellbeing can, in fact, serve as a catalyst for achieving mentoring goals that benefit diverse groups of students, faculty, and leaders. Wellbeing, mentoring, and policy, therefore, can be imagined as an interconnected system for promoting mental, emotional, and career fulfillment in educational contexts.

Attention on mentoring’s role in promoting wellbeing in higher education is not only timely in a pandemic world in recovery but also needed. To be clear, the extant literature on mentoring does recognize the value of wellbeing for fostering mentoring relationships, processes, and programs—in addition to participants’ PDL, performance, effectiveness, and contribution to the community (Adair & Reames, 2025; Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Dreer, 2021; Hobson, 2021; Hobson & Mullen, 2023; Kutsyruba & Godden, 2019a; Kutsyruba & Kochan, 2024, 2025a; Mullen, 2025a). But consideration of the dynamic of wellbeing in mentorship seems tangential within the wider scope of mentoring research, resulting in a promising albeit underexplored topic; that is, until more recently.

When wellbeing is a subject of interest in mentoring research, K-12 schooling is the favored context (Hobson & Mullen, 2023; Kutsyruba & Kochan, 2024), leaving higher education ripe for investigation, confirmed Dreer (2021). The wellbeing of educators and students in schools and universities alike broadens this focus (Kutsyruba & Godden, 2019b). Mentoring scholars have also devoted entire texts to mentoring for wellbeing in higher education across undergraduate, graduate, and faculty

contexts (Kutsyruba & Kochan, 2025a).

Unfortunately, education systems worldwide have experienced threats to the effectiveness, wellbeing, and retention of educators and leaders (Kutsyruba & Godden, 2019a). Mentorship has been found to ameliorate such threats and positively impact teachers’ and leaders’ effectiveness, wellbeing, and retention (Dreer, 2021) through such means as informal and group mentoring (Clutterbuck et al., 2017; Hobson & Mullen, 2023). However, these desirable outcomes are not always realized in educational settings.

Mentoring that prioritizes wellbeing promotes a growth-oriented approach to PDL (Hobson & Mullen, 2023). A definition of wellbeing in workplace mentoring is that it cultivates “flourishing by increasing positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment” and entails feeling good and functioning well (Seligman, 2011, p. 12). Indeed, flourishing is a core component of mentoring in adult relationships and salient direction of some recent research in mentoring (e.g., Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). Wellbeing, confirmed Keyes (2016), involves living a balanced life and functioning well by coping with life problems and stressors, learning and working effectively, and participating in community. Mentoring for wellbeing research may target mentoring beneficiaries: principals, teachers, and students (Kutsyruba & Kochan, 2024; Wheeler et al., 2024). Wellbeing models (e.g., Seligman, 2018) and mentoring applications (e.g., Adair & Reames, 2025) sponsor PDL processes that encourage and sustain educator wellbeing. In wellbeing contexts, affirming strategies (mindfulness, appreciation, gratitude, engagement, celebration, etc.) for enhancing mentoring relationships, interactions, and performance are enacted and studied (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Kutsyruba & Kochan, 2025b).

For example, Adair and Reames (2025) applied Seligman’s (2018) PERMA model of wellbeing (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment) in their research on mentoring for wellbeing from the standpoint of career flourishing in educational leadership. Seligman theorized that these elements are key to cultivating a life that is more fulfilling and balanced. From this standpoint, Adair and Reames examined their mentoring relationship as professor and doctoral student focusing on career transitions. Using Seligman’s model, they analyzed their journal entries and narratives and aligned aspects of their own psychological and career development with the five PERMA domains. To illustrate, in the positive emotion domain, categorized as psychosocial development (Kram’s concept from 1983), mentee Adair documented enjoying her mentor’s company, trusting her, and feeling encouraged to seek balance. Mentor Reames recorded feelings of personal trust, being appreciated for her strengths, and relief that

her mentee was handling the details of their work. Career development (Kram, 1983) was associated with such highlights as “professional belonging” by the mentee and “feel[ing] needed” by the mentor. As concluded, their learning relationship thrived with such mutual benefits as an enhanced sense of confidence, achievement, creativity, and companionship that continued in the postgraduate and late-career phases.

SAC and SACE

Support, accessibility, and collaboration (SAC) are established components of formal mentoring. I coined the acronym SAC (Mullen, 2025a) based on literature reviewed and my conclusion that these elements typify educational mentoring programs as described in research. The elements are relevant—they recur in studies of academic and teacher mentoring, except for equity, which is important to add, thereby turning SAC into SACE (“E” denotes equity). In mentoring contexts, equity involves (a) ensuring that program participants, regardless of their background or identity, receive fair and appropriate support; (b) accounting for any disparities and addressing them; and (c) creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment for novices.

Support

Support is a quality mentoring practice (New Teacher Center [NTC], 2018) that propels novices’ adaptation and learning through multifaceted opportunities, such as orientation and professional learning communities (Mullen, 2025a). High-leverage program activities (e.g., analyzing student work, common planning time, instructional strategies, two-way observations) advance newcomer PDL (Goldrick, 2016). Support needs to continue beyond the initial phase of workplace entry (Keese et al., 2023).

Accessibility

Accessibility involves mentor availability, services, resources, and opportunities. Mentors make themselves available to mentees and are honest and transparent to build trust. Tremendous support is needed to develop proficiency, so novices require mentors with certain aptitudes (willingness to mentor, be available, and so forth) who are a good match for them. Criteria for pairings include personality, grade level, content area, proximity, and preferred identifications (race, gender, etc.) (Mullen et al., 2022). While mentoring varies among novices in the same unit or team, mentor–mentee mismatches, poor access, and unmet needs can breed discontent and attrition (Harmsen et al., 2019). Inequities affect new teacher progress and wellbeing (Mullen,

2025a), worsened within racist systems that disadvantage and alienate members (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). In stark contrast, structures (policy, program, activity, planning, schedule, observation, etc.) that make mentoring accessible protect investment in every novice and mentor (Hobson, 2021; NTC, 2018).

Collaboration

Stakeholder collaboration is another quality mentoring practice (NTC, 2018). Responsibilities for principals and lead mentors extend beyond arranging strong matches (Mullen et al., 2022). When comprehensive programs allow novices time for collaboration, networking, and planning; reduced class sizes; and fewer lessons to prepare, the probability of turnover decreases and effective teaching increases (Harmsen et al., 2019; Hobson, 2021). Mentors collaboratively plan with their mentees and foster understanding of content, instructional planning, engagement, and assessment (Goldrick, 2016).

Equity

Equity involves the intentional creation of fair and inclusive learning conditions that foster educational experiences (Rigby & Tredway, 2015), a just distribution of resources, cultural recognition and valuing people, and sustainability (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). A professional standard in practice, research, pedagogy, preparation, and policy for just treatment and closing disparities, equity is a “mentoring approach” for supporting and sustaining teachers (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2015). Equity-oriented leadership improves the experiences and outcomes of minoritized populations and sustains goals for diverse communities (Mullen, 2025a).

SAC Transformed Into SACE

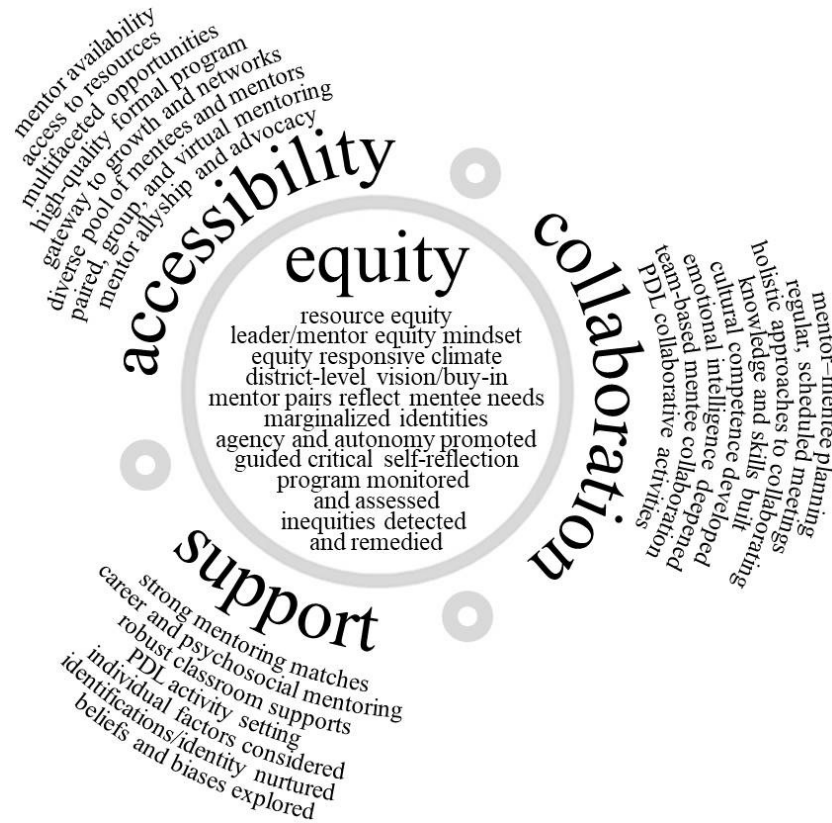
Although SAC is considered commonplace in mentoring situations, it can bypass equity and wellbeing. As such, equity’s value in mentoring for cultivating wellbeing has yet to be properly or fully acknowledged. The need for parity in encouraging support for mentees and mentors is apparent in emergent research on mentoring programs (e.g., Mullen, 2025a). I believe that the known components of school-based mentoring (i.e., SAC) have greater significance and utility when equity is intentionally incorporated. Mentoring as an initiative needs to be centered in equity, enabling the traditional elements (SAC) to be understood and assessed from an equity perspective. From this vantage point, SAC would be contextualized in equity terms and the

SACE reconceptualizes SAC and emboldens a metamorphosis that centers equity in program

tripartite construct diversified: Is the support equitable, the accessibility equitable, and the collaboration equitable?

A graphic of equity-centered mentoring, complete with descriptors, follows.

Figure 1: *SACE With Research Descriptors* (Mullen, 2025a; elaborated version)



(re)design. Equity-minded actors who advocate for diversity and social justice make efforts to avoid poor matches, unavailable mentors, or ineffectual mentoring. Equity-embedded programming upholds fidelity and consistency, as well as reflection and assessment in support of equitable outcomes. Outcomes supported by antiracist, inclusive K-12 mentoring programs include (a) developing the capacity of new teachers of color to better teach and support students, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) populations; (b) mentoring from mentor teachers who understand how race and culture inform PDL and cultural knowledge; and (c) benefiting from mentoring relationships with peers from similar backgrounds, including conversations that address race and racism (Carver-Thomas, 2017; Mullen, 2025a).

Regarding my framework, the “E” in SACE provokes a new way of seeing mentoring. Equity as a social justice principle orients developing, implementing, and assessing programs. Principals, deans, and program coordinators are encouraged to address new teacher, leader,

or faculty dissatisfaction and frustration, and, importantly, systemic racism through an equity-centered mentoring structure. In this context, systemic racism manifests as unequal access, racial disparities, microaggressions, implicit assumptions, and seniority-based policy and other stigmatizing policies (Merod, 2024). The equity champion would operationalize the SACE framework in ways that position mentoring practice to be supportive, accessible, collaborative, and equity-minded, such as by ensuring opportunities for quality PDL activity and incentivizing mentoring involvement (Mullen, 2025a). As Lee et al. (2024) explained, equity proponents would also address systemic racism in mentoring through dialogue to cultivate “critical consciousness,” equitable resource sharing, needs assessment, cultural humility, and “antiracism training”; moreover, they would encourage mentor reflectivity on “antiracist and inclusive mentoring” through such means as understanding and valuing “social identities” in relationships (pp. 6–7).

When SAC becomes SACE, critical thought

and action introduce a learning curve that make organizational transformation more possible. SACE prioritizes equitable support, access, and collaboration, as well as treatment; resources; and opportunities to learn, contribute, and succeed. For example, BIPOC seek to collaborate with allies and access their own networks. Considering that school mentoring programs may not be racially diverse or have BIPOC representatives, equity champions would facilitate these relationships with racially aligned allies and networks. “Equitable access” to organizational resources/networks may help with retaining BIPOC individuals and sustain workforces (Lee et al., 2024).

Arguably, SACE is a powerful structure for reimagining mentoring for inclusive leadership in dynamic ways, provoking critical reflection on mentoring situations from an equity lens. From this angle, equity is neither conceived nor treated as a program add-on but rather as a principle that recenters mentorship. To create a culture of equity, inequities in mentoring programs and workplaces would be mindfully monitored, detected, and addressed. Ascertaining a program’s success and consistency with antiracist, inclusive practice, organizers would track metrics to monitor activity (e.g., number of active mentoring relationships and check-ins, activities accomplished by cross-cultural or diverse pairings, etc.). They would also collect participant data pre- and post-intervention to arrange strong mentoring matches and determine impact. Furthermore, follow-up data would allow for a program’s long-term effects to be measured and any necessary improvements made (Mullen, 2025a). Mentors who carry out such practices are intentional about supporting BIPOC communities, using inclusive language, acknowledging their positionality, and practicing antiracist pedagogy (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021).

Organizational outcomes would show improved teacher retention and performance, as well as student learning (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Keese et al., 2023). As theorized, equity is a foundational element that builds the capacity of the recognized components by empowering actors to think and do work that is consistent with equitable support, access, and collaboration. SACE supports equity and accessibility in mentoring by ensuring deliberate movement toward fair outcomes through equity-oriented, culturally responsive initiatives.

Turning SACE Into SACEW Highlights Wellbeing

As a lens wellbeing can be used to consider the SACE model in deeper and more expansive terms, meaning that SACE can be seen from a wellbeing angle. Here are four ways to theorize the role of wellbeing relative to the SACE model. Wellbeing can be (a) applied in a particular setting to gauge just how effectively mentoring promotes wellbeing through support, accessibility, and collaboration; (b) seen as an underlying element in the SACE model, thus not needing to be called out per se should the stance be that support, accessibility, and collaboration imply wellbeing and health; (c) identified as a fifth critical component that extends SACE, thus forming the newly envisioned model SACEW (“W” denotes wellbeing); or (d) theorized as a powerful organizing force in mentorship. From this standpoint, a wellbeing-centric view of mentoring would emerge.

Figure 2 is consistent with the fourth possibility, with SACEW (not SACE) imagined as a model. As such, this honors wellbeing’s pivotal role in recognizing the importance of healthy mentoring at an especially tough time in public education.

As a worldview, SACEW offers refuge for mentoring actors and a space to take risks, learn,

Figure 2: SACEW, a Wellbeing-centric View of Mentoring (Mullen)



and grow in an environment where happiness matters. PDL is guided in desirable directions and constraints are managed or overcome. Here, participants experience, express, and enliven mentoring through positive interaction, beneficial activity, and other behaviors that boost health and performance. Wellbeing would be conceived through goal-setting and enacted via mentoring activities and strategies, constituting an aim and outcome of mentorship. Where approached as a measure of mentoring programs or processes, wellbeing can be assessed using participants' self-reports, among other sources (see Keyes, 2016).

Future Directions

For mentoring researchers and practitioners, possibilities abound for applying SACEW to theory, research, or practice. As such, wellbeing could serve as the lead concept of mentoring initiatives and an area of focus for boosting happiness, satisfaction, and so forth. A related idea is to pair wellbeing with equity or another SACEW element to discover how wellbeing influences equity in mentoring (e.g., equitable opportunities for quality learning experiences) or how equity affects or facilitates wellbeing. As an example, digital wellbeing, a priority of whole-school approaches to wellbeing (Linewize, 2025), could benefit from an equity lens. Digital wellbeing in a mentoring culture directs attention to populations requiring guidance on online safety, authenticity, voice, communication, and decision-making. More research is also warranted on wellbeing from an organizational perspective, specifically mentoring, leadership, and PDL related to work cultures and collaborative processes for advancing and sustaining flourishing in educational environments.

Conclusion

SACEW contributes to mentoring knowledge and extends and deepens SACE. Viewing SACE from a wellbeing lens arguably makes it timelier and more relevant. The support of wellbeing in mentoring depends on the organizational capacity of leaders and mentors to create conditions that promote flourishing in both psychosocial and career contexts. Spotlighting wellbeing through SACEW invites generative ideas for theory, research, practice, and policy. This response to the educational crisis of our age strikes me as necessary. A vision driving application of SACEW is to go beyond cultivating excellence in mentoring. At stake is the welfare of human flourishing. Wellbeing-centric mentoring can prioritize the resilience of people, place, and the profession. If we are to thrive in the face of adversity, wellbeing at individual, community, and professional levels must be maintained.

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