

Comparing Experiences of Counseling Mentor Award Winners with Professional Guidelines

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Abstract

Mentorship award winners from the American Counseling Association (ACA) and Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) provided their experiences with mentorship. We compared both qualitative and quantitative responses to alignment with the ACES research mentorship guidelines, Rheineck Mentoring Model, previous research, and best practices. Participants reported ethical and cross-cultural considerations with mentees; with counselor educators still struggling with what mentorship looks like and how to provide effective mentorship around publication and research, specifically scientific integrity. Findings indicate alignment with the best practices in the profession, but outline a need for research mentorship for developing professionals.

Key Words

Counseling • Mentor • ACES research mentorship guidelines • Rheineck mentoring model • Social justice

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Benefits and cautionary tales of engaging in mentoring relationships, both formal and informal, have long been described in counseling literature (Black et al., 2004; Briggs & Pehrsson, 2008; Casto et al., 2005; Schwiebert et al., 1999; Walker, 2006; Warren, 2005). The range of mentorship topics varies from general research mentorship in counselor education (Briggs & Pehrsson, 2008), strategies for helping students through mentorship (Black et al., 2004), mentoring women in academia (Casto et al., 2005; Hammer et al., 2014; Levitt, 2010; Rheineck & Roland, 2008; Schwiebert et al., 1999; Solomon & Barden, 2016), and multicultural applications (Bemak & Chung, 2011; Walker, 2006), to guidelines and principles of best practice (Borders et al., 2011; Detweiler Bedell et al., 2016). Subsequently, threaded throughout the literature are mentorship models and frameworks.

Three of these models focus on the multicultural aspects of mentorship. Shultz and colleagues (2001) provided a mentoring model for students of color. To meet the needs of diverse student populations, Shultz et al. (2001) designed, implemented, and published the first-year findings of their mentorship-infused program. The second multicultural model, the Rheineck Mentoring Model (Rheineck & Roland, 2008), focused on women in counselor education in their work. Following an exploratory study focusing on both personal and professional mentoring needs of female doctoral students (Rheineck & Roland, 2008), came the development of the Rheineck Mentoring Model. Finally, Solomon and Barden (2016) created a self-compassion framework for counselor educator mothers, encouraging mentoring for psychological well-being, while recognizing barriers faced by females in a higher education setting. The framework provides a feminist cultural perspective to recruit and retain women in counselor education (Solomon & Barden, 2016).

In 2012, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) endorsed guidelines for research mentorship, providing an overview and suggestions for future use (Borders et al., 2012). A recent content analysis examining trends of mentorship in higher education within professional counseling journals called for additional empirical research on existing mentorship guidelines and models created for the counseling field (Rausch et al., 2019).

There are quite a few publications in the area of mentorship in the past 20 years (Rausch et al., 2019). Specifically, there are numerous non-research articles on the subject, with limited empirical research on mentorship. An essential piece of the non-research mentorship publications is the emphasis on models and guidelines for effective mentorship. The researchers intend to add to the empirical research on what is effective mentorship based on what the best mentors in the field of counselor education experience as effective practices.

Effective mentorship is critical to study because mentorship is the strongest predictor of identity development in Master-level counselors-in-training, with the advisor-advisee relationship predicting professional identity development (Ewe & Ng, under review). In doctoral programs, mentorship is linked to identity development (Limberg et al., 2013). Limberg et al. (2013) found that through qualitative analysis, mentorship with faculty and mentors contributes to professional identity development in doctoral students studying to become counselor educators. Creating an identity as a counselor and counselor educator is conclusively impacted through the existence of a mentorship relationship at both the master's and doctoral levels.

Professional Guidelines and Research

The authors in this research used the ACES guidelines for mentorship (Borders et al., 2012), the Rheineck Mentoring Model (Rheineck & Roland, 2008), and additional areas from professional research including multicultural, social justice, ethical, and beneficial aspects of mentorship (Bemak & Chung, 2011; Detweiler Bedell et al., 2016; Haizlip, 2012) as the theoretical foundation for the basis for inquiry in the instrumentation. The ACES guidelines for mentorship outline mentor and mentee characteristics of an effective research mentorship. Briefly summarized, the mentor is expected to be a competent and ethical researcher, demonstrate 17 personal characteristics or traits, and can recognize one's limitations in the relationship. The mentee is expected to be an ethical researcher, an effective learner, and forthcoming about one's needs in the relationship (Borders et al., 2012). The emphasis in this model is limited to a research mentorship and only categorizes one type or one part of a dynamic mentoring process.

In Rhineck and Roland's (2008) exploratory research, the researchers create a model with both personal and professional domains of a mentoring relationship between women. While this is the only empirical evidence of what specific gender needs are present among women in academia, it is only considering one part of the gender spectrum in counselor education. Haizlip (2012) provided an inclusive model of mentorship based on addressing racial disparity but specifically focuses on the African American counselor educator.

The implications from the research, as mentioned earlier, and conceptual models support our argument for additional empirical research on existing mentorship guidelines and models created for the counseling field. The aforementioned models and research support specific aspects of identity (i.e., gender; race) in the mentorship relationship that are important to consider. Other models only address research (i.e., Borders et al., 2011) over service and teaching. There is limited empirical evidence on what is relevant today (e.g., race, gender, research, or something else) in the mentorship relationship among counselor educators.

The following research questions guided our current study:

Research Question 1: How do the experiences of recipients of the ACA and ACES mentor awards align with research?

Research Question 2: How do the experiences of recipients of the ACA and ACES mentor awards align with the ACES guidelines for research mentorship?

Research Question 3: How do the experiences of recipients of the ACA and ACES mentor awards align with the Rheineck Mentoring Model?

Method

Study Group

The participant sample was obtained through the lists of ACA and ACES mentor award winners on the websites of each of the professional counseling organizations. From the ACA David K. Brooks Distinguished Mentor Award winner list, beginning in 1999 and ending in 2016, 19 potential participants were listed. Of the potential participants from the ACA award, three are deceased, and three were unable to be located, resulting in a possibility of 13 participants (11 male, two female). The other mentorship award comes from the regional divisions of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Due to the availability of funding from

the research grant, we selected from the Southern, North Central, and Western Associations for Counselor Education and Supervision, seven possible participants from 2012-2017 (four female, three male); adding these participants to the ACA Mentor Award participants, we created an overall sample of 20. The ACES mentor award winner sample was not all-inclusive; we will discuss this limitation later.

The response rate for the survey was 50%. Of the 10, seven chose to identify a gender (male = 4, female = 3). The sample includes eight full professors, and one of each of the following: associate professor, research associate, retired faculty, clinical faculty, tenure-track, and higher education administration, with participants choosing all applicable professional ranks.

Data Collection Tools

Participants responded to survey questions via a Qualtrics link. The research team designed the survey questions, which focused on three areas of interest: ACES guidelines for mentorship (n = 14; [Borders et al., 2012](#)), the Rheineck Mentoring model (n = 6; [Rheineck & Roland, 2008](#)), and additional areas from professional research including multicultural, social justice, ethical, and beneficial aspects of mentorship (n = 7; [Bemak & Chung, 2011](#); [Detweiler Bedell et al., 2016](#); [Haizlip, 2012](#)). The skip-logic function provided efficiency and direction for the responses, with each participant completing a maximum of 25 responses.

Procedure

This research was made possible by a grant through the Translational Research Program at a southeastern CACREP-accredited university. The organization awards this grant to a student who is currently being mentored by a professor. For this project, the first author chose to provide mentorship to a school counseling student who was interested in better understanding the internal grant process and who was engaged in a mentorship content analysis with the first author. We received the designation of exempt status by the university's institutional review board before engaging in recruitment.

Each individual was sent a recruitment email three times at one-week intervals over three weeks. We removed the names of individuals contacting the Principal Investigator for payment from further recruitment emails. We contacted mentor award winners without email addresses listed online via social media site LinkedIn, or other mentors were utilized to provide email addresses for recruitment efforts. We offered participants a stipend of \$30.00 for participation. Of the potential 20 participants, 10 provided full responses--a response rate of 50%. Participants were able to log into the survey and save their results, allowing them three weeks to potentially complete the survey.

Data Analysis

First, we used descriptive statistics to provide data regarding gender, rank, status, mentorship groups, whether they received research mentorship outside of the classroom, areas in which they received mentorship (promotion and tenure, research methodology, data analysis, scientific integrity, publishing, research collaboration, teaching, service, networking, branding, other topics), and whether they received formal training in mentorship. The second set of data includes information related to the ACES guidelines for research mentorship ([Borders et al., 2012](#)). These statistics incorporated areas which they intentionally provide mentorship (hands on role modeling, exposure to various research methods, understanding the research process,

intentional and timely feedback, networking opportunities, professional etiquette assistance, research advice, teaching advice, strong communication skills, promotion of scientific integrity, self-understanding, work-life balance, academia-motherhood balance, emotional support, developmental challenge, nurturing/caring attitude, availability, encouraging autonomy, ethical behavior modeling, inform of limitations as a mentor, power differential discussion). Each of these align with various areas of the ACES guidelines.

The next statistics focused on the Rheineck Mentoring Model for women, beginning with familiarity with the model. The skip logic function provided those identifying as a male to skip the remaining questions associated with the model, as [Rheineck and Roland \(2008\)](#) designed the model for woman-to-woman mentorship. Mentor award winners provided data as to areas of focus for woman-to-woman mentorship, including a focus on the grad school and professional transitions. Based on results from [Rheineck and Roland \(2008\)](#), we also asked participants about the words mentees use to describe them (e.g., challenging, affirming, safe, supportive, helpful, informative, open, inspiring, and reassuring). Additionally, we asked them about the level of importance they place on female mentees.

The final set of descriptive statistics includes two questions incorporating themes from previous research in the field. The first question involves mentoring a student of color or cross-gender/cultural background. The second, whether the mentor ever experienced having a mentee as a student.

Following the descriptive statistical analysis, we used a copy of the interview questions, which included coding for each item. The ACES research mentorship guidelines, Rheineck Mentoring Model, and other research articles which informed the study ([Bemak & Chung, 2011](#); [Briggs & Pehrsson, 2008](#); [Solomon & Barden, 2016](#)) were all coded initially, and portions of each of the three areas specifically align with the interview questions. We assigned codes (letter of the alphabet followed by a number) to portions of published previous research findings, then listed this code next to the survey question which aligned with the research. We examined the results of our data using the code book, compared it to the previous research findings, and reached 100% interrater agreement with the separate coding processes among team members.

Qualitative responses from participants were not coded. [Gurwitsch \(1967\)](#) explained the concept of intentionality impacting perception. As the members of the research team perceive things differently based on “wishing, willing, or judging,” removing the possible bias of team members’ perception by including the participants unaltered words helps create the most concrete method of explanation—in their own words ([Gurwitsch, 1967, p. 128](#)). Therefore, no coding process occurred for qualitative responses; they are reported verbatim.

Findings

Research Question 1: How do the experiences of recipients of the ACA and ACES mentor awards align with research?

The first set of survey questions incorporated information from previous findings in the study of mentorship as well as adherence to the ACES research guidelines (Appendix A). The majority of participants provided mentorship for master’s students (26.32%), followed closely by doctoral students and pre tenured faculty (23.68% each), and other mentored groups included are tenured faculty (18.42%), undergraduate students (5.26%) and colleagues (2.63%). In this sample, 70% report specifically receiving research mentorship outside

of class time as a pre-tenured counselor educator, with 51.14% responding that the mentorship they received focused on their research needs, as opposed to the needs of their mentor. Responses to the question “Please check which type(s) of mentorship you received as a pre-tenured counselor educator” are in Table 1.

Table 1

Types of Mentorship Received by Mentors

Mentorship Type	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Promotion & Tenure Guidance	3	10.71	10.71
Research Methodology & Assistance	4	14.29	25
Data Analysis Help	3	10.71	35.71
Mentorship on Scientific Integrity	2	7.14	42.85
Publishing Assistance	4	14.29	57.14
Research Collaboration Help	3	10.71	67.85
Teaching	3	10.71	78.56
Service	2	7.14	85.7
Networking	3	10.71	96.41
Branding	1	3.57	99.98
Other	0	0	99.98
Total	28		99.98

Participants indicating they did not receive research mentorship outside of class time (30%) responded that research mentorship was not available to them (80%) or that their colleagues no longer did research (20%). This sample of mentor award winners indicates that 90% did not receive formal or intentional training to become a mentor. The participant indicating they had received training stated:

‘I have attended various workshops on mentoring and have enrolled in a certificate program as part of a fellowship program. I have also been selected as a research mentor in several grant-funded programs where I received specific training on mentoring.’

Research Question 2: How do the experiences of recipients of the ACA and ACES mentor awards align with the ACES guidelines for research mentorship?

Participant responses indicate intentionality with their mentorship choices. The most common responses to the areas which participants intentionally include in their mentorship work included hands-on role-modeling, providing constructive and timely feedback, creating professional networking opportunities, strong communication, and being available to their mentee (90%). Frequency of responses to all included mentorship areas is in Table 2.

Table 2

Intentional Mentorship Skills Utilized

Mentorship Provided	Frequency	Percent
Hands-on role modeling	9	90
Exposing mentee to various research methods	6	60
Helping to understand all aspects of the research process	7	70
Providing constructive and timely feedback	9	90
Create professional networking opportunities	9	90
Professional etiquette assistance	6	60
Research advice	7	70
Teaching advice	6	60
Strong communication	9	90
Promote scientific integrity	4	40
Help with self-understanding	6	60
Help with personal and professional life balance	8	80
Help with the specific balance of academia and motherhood	6	60
Help when they emotionally "feel down"	7	70
Challenging the mentee developmentally	8	80
Nurturing/Caring Attitude	7	70
Being available to my mentee(s)	9	90
Encouraging autonomy	6	60
Modeling ethical behavior	8	80

Participants noted sharing research expertise, including research design, data collection, and management, evaluation, data analysis, dissemination of results/findings, ways to plan a study, qualitative and quantitative research designs, and writing for publication. However, participants also included sharing expertise in navigating academia, overall professional development, and topical expertise; one participant reported not identifying as a strong researcher.

Three questions centered on the idea of holding intentional discussions with mentees. When asked whether they inform mentees of their limitations as a research mentor, 90% responded that they had; the same percentage responded they had discussed the power differential of the mentor/mentee relationship with their mentee. Participants also hold conversations addressing cultural differences in the mentorship relationship. When asked to describe ways mentors address these differences, they noted this conversation as a “fundamental step in building an effective mentoring relationship,” listing discussion of the culture of their mentees, acknowledging and discussing differences, indicating the desire to learn more about the mentee in order to build a personal and professional relationship, demonstrate curiosity about different factors, and asking questions about the worldview of their mentee.

The final set of questions incorporates additional research on cross-cultural and social justice mentorship, ethics, benefits of mentorship, and where the counseling field needs to grow in terms of mentorship. All participants report mentoring a student or students of color or a cross-gender or cross-cultural background. Responses to the specific question, “What strategies have you used when mentoring students of color, and/or cross-cultural backgrounds?” included the theme of discussing similarities and differences present in the

mentoring relationship, preparing mentees for racism in higher education (e.g., social marginalization, implicit hostility), build trusting and safe relationships, be respectful, consciousness of bias, offer support, and attempt to understand their experiences. One question inquired about specific strategies or goals used to provide social justice mentorship, with participants responding, “My role is sometimes to advocate for my mentee to minimize the adverse effects of institutional bias,” “I encourage them to seriously consider if they think my views could be embraced or at the least, respected before they sign on in the mentoring relationship,” and, “Explaining how faculty might prejudge their abilities.” Two participants responded with questions regarding social justice, including, “What is social justice? Everyone has their own ideas on that, so it is hard for me to respond,” and,

‘I am more ‘ignorant’ than ‘learned’ of social justice...for me, it is all about championing my mentees. This means ensuring my mentees are treated fairly. Thus, I advocate on mentee’s behalves for many issues, from pay to housing needs. My focus is on ‘attempting’ to treat each person as I wish to be treated, and when I can step up to the plate on their behalf, I am honored to do so.’

In response to a question regarding the ethical dilemma of having a mentee who also is enrolled in a course taught by their mentor, 60% of participants responded this has occurred. Strategies for handling this type of ethical dilemma included being clear about roles and boundaries, following University ethical codes and practices, and trying not to appear to favor the student with their time.

Three questions involved the benefits to mentorship--personal, professionally, and for their mentees. Participants felt they benefit from mentorship by teaching diverse ways of thinking, expanding understanding of the human condition, learning from their mentees, experiencing the feeling of honor due to mentorship, respecting differences, watching mentees grow and mature, and learning about themselves. Professional benefits include becoming a more effective instructor, advisor, and scholar; influencing the profession; staying up-to-date on professional issues; learning new areas of research and inquiry; learning about the field; having co-authors and presenters creates ease of distributing research and receiving awards and recognition. Third, participants report the benefits for graduate students include gaining knowledge about what can happen in their future helps reduce errors in decision-making, allowing their career to blossom, inspiration, learning how to apply for positions and how to publish, career goal clarity, creating and sustaining hope, having an ally, understanding how their self impacts their professional life, increased confidence in skills, and understanding their role as an educator and the role of research in professional development.

The final question, “Where does the counseling field need to grow, in terms of mentorship?” provided several responses, which fell into two areas: increasing mentorship and specific ways to improve personal mentorship. Participants felt that increasing theory, models, and pedagogy for training others to be mentors were important. Many mentioned the need for increased mentorship (80%), particularly due to being a “relationship-oriented profession.” Specific suggestions include recognizing work/life balance and not penalizing for outside obligations and the use of Dr. Michael Karcher’s work on the benefits of mentoring.

Research Question 3: How do the experiences of recipients of the ACA and ACES mentor awards align with the Rheineck Mentoring Model?

The second set of questions pinpoint areas consistent with the Rheineck Mentoring Model, limiting participants to answer questions regarding woman-to-woman mentorship (Rheineck & Roland, 2008). Accordingly, 50% of the respondents had provided woman-to-woman, 10% had not, and 40% do not identify as a woman. Of those respondents, 75% stated they are “completely unaware” of the Rheineck and Roland Mentoring Model for mentoring female doctoral students, with 25% responding they are “very familiar” with the model.

Self-understanding is a theme of the model, and two questions focused on this theme. The answers to the question, “When mentoring female doctoral students, how much assistance do you believe you provided in self understanding related to graduate school transition?” were split between “quite a bit” and “a lot” (50% each), with no participants responding “some,” “very little,” or “none.” The second question involved self-understanding related to the professional transition for female doctoral students, to which participants responded with the same answers, “quite a bit” (50%), and “a lot” (50%).

Rheineck and Roland (2008) found that female mentees describe the work of their mentor in various ways. When asked which words our participants felt their mentees might use to describe them, as aligned with Rheineck and Roland (2008), they responded consistently. The results are in Table 3.

Table 3

Mentee Descriptions of Mentor

Mentor Traits	Frequency	Percent
Challenging	5	100
Affirming	4	80
Safe	4	80
Supportive	4	80
Helpful	3	60
Informative	5	100
Open	4	80
Inspiring	4	80
Reassuring	3	60

Participants also place importance on the developmentally specific needs of female mentees in woman-to-woman mentorship relationships. In response to the question, “How much importance do you place on the developmentally specific needs of female mentees?” 50% of the participants stated, “quite a bit,” with 25% responding “some” and 25% choosing “a lot.” The answers “very little” and “none” were not chosen by any of the participants.

Discussion

Research Question 1: How do the experiences of recipients of the ACA and ACES mentor awards align with research?

For this study, 70% of participants reported receiving research mentorship as a pre-tenured counselor educator, which is similar to what [Briggs and Pehrsson \(2008\)](#) found, as 77% of their participants reported receiving research mentorship. While 30% of participants of the [Briggs and Pehrsson \(2008\)](#) study reported that this mentorship focused on their needs, we had 57% report the mentorship focused on their needs. Previous research, which guided our questions, led us to ask about the types of research mentorship our participants received. Participants in this study were similar to previous research findings in that more participants in this study reported receiving guidance about promotion and tenure than mentorship on scientific integrity ([Briggs & Pehrsson, 2008](#)); however, participants were dissimilar in that more received research methodology assistance than guidance about promotion and tenure, and the same amount who received guidance about promotion and tenure also received data analysis help (30%). [Hill and colleagues \(2005\)](#) found 70% of their participants reported little or no research collaboration; this coincides with the low number of participants in this study reporting receiving help with research collaboration (10.71%). Previous research points to publishing as the highest source of stress, which [Borders et al. \(2012\)](#) suggested may coincide with a lack of effective mentoring. Participants in this study indicated the highest levels of mentoring in the area of research methodology and publishing assistance (14.29%, each); however, the percentage reporting this type of research mentorship can be considered low. Additionally, 80% of the mentorship award winners participating in this study reported research mentorship was not available to them, with 90% reporting they received no formal training to become a mentor.

[Solomon and Barden \(2016\)](#) created a framework for the mentorship of counselor educators who are also mothers. Their work, along with [Williams \(2005\)](#), suggested counselor educator mothers, or other mothers in academia, experience barriers to success after asking for flexible schedules, extending the tenure clock, or requesting parental leave as a result of becoming pregnant or expanding their families with the addition of children. When asked whether they have ever helped “mentees who are struggling with the specific balance of academia and motherhood,” 60% responded that they had. This area of mentorship may serve as a future area of specific mentorship, as a study by [Mason et al. \(2013\)](#) suggested that for individuals with children under the age of six years old, men were 38% more likely to receive tenure than women.

[Bemak and Chung \(2011\)](#) approached mentorship from a social justice counseling and advocacy perspective, moving students from an intellectual to an action-oriented focus for working with social injustice across levels ([Bemak & Chung, 2007](#)). Mentor award winner participants from this study aligned with the call from [Bemak and Chung \(2011\)](#), with 100% responding that they have mentored students of color or cross-gender/cross-cultural backgrounds. The responses from our participants regarding specific cross-gender or cross-cultural strategies they infuse in their mentorship work most naturally aligned with the recommendation from [Bemak and Chung \(2011\)](#) to “build partnerships” (p.216); however, the open-ended nature of our question may have hindered participants from responding more specifically to the other social justice recommendations. The themes present in our responses included inclusion, support, respect, and creating safe relationships.

Research Question 2: How do the experiences of recipients of the ACA and ACES mentor awards align with the ACES guidelines for research mentorship?

There are two main sections outlined in the ACES research mentorship guidelines: characteristics of mentors, and characteristics of mentees (Borders et al., 2012). Each section is then separated into specific areas such as knowledge and skills, ethical research behaviors, and personal characteristics for mentorship (Borders et al., 2012). The responses from this study indicate an alignment with several areas of the ACES research mentorship guidelines, including modeling ethical behavior (80%; Characteristic 2.h.), informing mentees of their limitations as a research mentor (90%; e.g., Characteristic 4.a.), challenging the mentee developmentally (80%; Characteristic 3.m.), being available to mentee (90%; Characteristic 3.a.), providing critical feedback (90%; e.g., Characteristic 3.k.), discussing the power differential within the relationship (90%; e.g., Characteristic 2.e.), and addressing cultural differences (90%; e.g., Characteristic 3.q.; Borders et al., 2012).

Only one area of the ACES research mentorship guidelines where our participants did not align as strongly involved promoting scientific integrity (40%; Characteristic 2.h.). Also, one respondent indicated, “I don’t do specific research mentoring. The mentoring that I do is devoted to overall professional development.”

Research Question 3: How do the experiences of recipients of the ACA and ACES mentor awards align with the Rheineck Mentoring Model?

When asked about providing woman-to-woman mentorship, 40% of our sample responded, “yes.” Of those participants responding “yes,” 75% were completely unaware of the Rheineck Mentoring Model, with 25% responding they were “very familiar” with it. Rheineck and Roland (2008) found 1st- and 3rd-year doctoral students prioritizing receiving help with self-understanding both related to the graduate level and professional level transitions. The mentors from our study, though the majority were unfamiliar with the Rheineck Mentoring Model, responded they assisted with self-understanding at the graduate level transition and professional transition (50% “quite a bit” and 50% responding, “a lot”). Participants from the Rheineck and Roland (2008) study mentioned valuing assistance with professional etiquette, research advice, and teaching advice. The mentors in this study responded they provided assistance and advice in all three areas--60%, 70%, and 60%, respectively. Also, Rheineck and Roland (2008) found that participants requested help when they were “feeling down,” an area also captured with our participants at 70% agreeing this is something they offer as a mentor. Our female respondents also suggested they place at a minimum “some” importance on the developmentally specific needs of female mentees (25%), with the majority responding “quite a bit” (50%); this relates to the findings of Rheineck and Roland (2008), which suggest that mentors are critical to the personal and professional growth of female students. The final aspect of the Rheineck Mentoring Model captured in this research involves the terms participants from the Rheineck and Roland (2008) study used to describe their mentors. Each of these terms was selected by our mentors, with “challenging” and “informative” the terms were chosen most often from our participants (90%).

Limitations

As is common with research, this study is not without limitations. The first limitation involves the imprecision of our measures. As with descriptive research, we sought to understand participant experiences with mentorship better, but with a survey instrument created by the research team, we cannot be positive the questions

were interpreted or perceived in an intended manner. This could lead to responses from participants which do not reflect the spirit of the survey.

Secondly, the sample size was not all-inclusive of every winner of the ACA and ACES regional and national mentor awards. The research funding limited the number of potential participants, and we had a 50% response rate. Additionally, the time constraints on the funding did not allow a second distribution of the survey to additional participants based on remaining funds. This limitation results in the loss of capturing all mentor award winners from these two counseling organizations. This limits our external validity, and while we can learn from the experiences of our participants, we do not have enough data to warrant generalizability.

Implications for Counselor Educators

The lessons we may take away from the ACA and ACES mentorship award winners are numerous. Firstly, counselor educators are still struggling with what mentorship looks like and how to provide effective mentorship around publication and research, specifically scientific integrity, based on the results from Research Question 1. Even though [Borders et al. \(2012\)](#) provided the profession with concrete steps on what mentorship looks like, the professional struggles with implementing those recommendations. Perhaps this can be attributed to the variation among the types of universities that house counselor education programs. Often in universities that are not R1 designated, the emphasis is on teaching rather than publication for promotion and tenure. As a result, there may be neglected emphasis on research. However, the authors would argue that scientific integrity is important for promoting the field of counselor education within universities and colleges.

Secondly, as for what mentorship looks like, the authors think addressing this issue is imperative in doctoral-level programs. With the emphasis on supervision in counselor education, mentorship seems like a natural adjunct to the learning process. While the leap seems intuitive, the counselor education field needs an agreed-upon comprehensive operationalized definition of mentorship. This issue is cited again and again in the literature ([Black et al., 2004](#); [Borders et al., 2011](#)). In this definition, the authors argue that the themes identified in this research are important to include: inclusion, support, respect, and creating safe relationships.

In sum, this study presented the experiences of mentorship award winners in the counseling profession, yet in the helping profession, particularly, mentorship practices can occur naturally without the relationship defined as one of mentoring. The participants in this study adhered to many of the best practices and guidelines outlined by [Borders et al. \(2011\)](#), [Bemak and Chung \(2011\)](#), and [Rheineck and Roland \(2008\)](#), whether or not they were intentionally adhering to these practices and models. Further empirical research is warranted, as the benefits to both mentor and mentee are numerous.

Ethic Approval

We declare that the research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. There is no conflict of interest in the research. The study approved by August University Institutional Review Board (05.02.2018, 1160846-3).

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